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ALPHA™



JINGS!

CRIVENS!

HELP MA
BOAB!

COR!

CRIKEY!

BLIMEY!
IT'S THAT
ALPHA
BLOKE!

?

THE
BRITISH
SUPERHERO®

-RV-



ALPHA™

THE BRITISH SUPERHERO

Alpha: The British Superhero

All stories written by Chris Murray.
Front Cover & Production by Phillip Vaughan.
Contents, artwork by Elliot Balson.
Frontispiece, artwork by Rebecca Horner.
Introduction, artwork by Letty Wilson.

British Comics in the 1930s

Dick Dickson, in 'The Arbroath Devil', in *Chump* #1151, artwork by Norrie Millar.
First appearance of Alpha, in *Trump* #1227, artwork by Norrie Millar (after Jock McCail).
Alpha and Bucket Boy, in *Trump* #1235, artwork by Norrie Millar.
Interview with Nat Fullerton.

British Comics in the 1940s

Alpha in *War Fun Comics* #6, artwork by Norrie Millar.
Super-Alpha, artwork by Rebecca Horner (after Dennis M. Reader).
Super-Alpha Thriller, featuring Saltire, artwork by Rebecca Horner (after Dennis M. Reader).
Dynamax Comics, artwork by Damon Herd (after Bob Monkhouse).

British Comics in the 1950s

'Pop Goes the Art World' in *Big Whoop Comics* #9, artwork by Letty Wilson.
Universe Comics #14, artwork by Elliot Balson (after *Electroman* by King-Ganteaume studios).

British Comics in the 1960s

'Words Escape Me' in *Alpha* #1, artwork by Phillip Vaughan.
Alpha Mail, letters page.
British reprint of *Alpha* #1 in *Fabulous Comics* #1, artwork by Phillip Vaughan
Alfa #1 (Spanish edition), artwork by Hannah Rose.

British Comics in the 1970s

'The Big Comic Con', from *Alpha Winter Special*, artwork by Jillian Fleck.
Alpha meets The Big E, artwork by Dave Gibbons, coloured by Phillip Vaughan.
'The Nat Fullerton Name Story', art by Damon Herd.

British Comics in the 1980s

'Alpha Reborn', in *Star Warrior* #2, artwork by Elliot Balson.
Demon Magazine, artwork by Norrie Millar.
Palibro toy range, artwork by Phillip Vaughan.

British Comics in the 1990s

Alpha Girl Poster, artwork by Rossi Gifford.
'Alpha Girl vs Dr Oculus and his Amazing Mulvey Scope', in *Alpha Girl* #4, artwork by Rossi Gifford.
Doctor Oculus poster, artwork by Chris Murray, coloured by Rebecca Horner.
'A Day in the Life of Doc Oculus', artwork by Letty Wilson.
'The Unmentionables', artwork by Elliot Balson, coloured by Mike Maynard.

British Comics in the 2000s

'Revolver', in *Ultimate Alpha* #1, artwork by Yannis Giagias.
'Superdeath' advertisement, artwork by Chris Murray, coloured by Rebecca Horner.
Sky Knight by Dan McDaid, inked by Norrie Millar, coloured by Phillip Vaughan and 'Weasel and the Captain' by Montynero.
Interview with Molly Fullerton, with Trixie strip, artwork by Letty Wilson.
Alpha, artwork by Helen Robinson.
The British Superhero by Chris Murray.
Thumbnails and sketches
Advertisement for *The British Superhero*, artwork by Phillip Vaughan and Chris Murray.
Creator Biographies
Back Cover, Alpha, in *Trump* #1287, artwork by Norrie Millar (after Jock McCail).

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ALPHATM

THE BRITISH SUPERHERO



WRITTEN BY CHRIS MURRAY.

DESIGN AND PRODUCTION BY PHILLIP VAUGHAN.

***ART BY ELLIOT BALSON, DAMON HERD, JILLIAN FLECK, YANNIS GIAGIAS,
ROSSI GIFFORD, REBECCA HORNER, MIKE MAYNARD, NORRIE MILLAR,
HELEN ROBINSON, HANNAH ROSE, PHILLIP VAUGHAN, AND LETTY WILSON.***

WITH THANKS TO DAVE GIBBONS, DAN MCDAID AND MONTYNERO.



INTRODUCTION

British Superheroes? Surely not! The superhero was designed to soar over towering American skyscrapers, not sandstone tenements and the depressed post-industrial wastelands of British cities...

But there were British superheroes, many of them, as I discovered over the course of writing a book on the subject (published by University Press of Mississippi). This research shone a light on the murky and largely forgotten world of British superheroes, revealing that these characters existed in a complex dynamic with their American counterparts, reflecting the tangled relationship between the two countries. Many British superheroes were straight imitations of American ones, whereas other subverted and parodied the notion of the superhero, and by extension, America itself, or the desire sometimes seen in British culture and politics to emulate America, or to over-empathise the 'special relationship' between the countries, as described by Winston Churchill. At some point in writing this book I had the idea to try to create comics that captured the essence of my findings. Luckily, we have a large number of young comics artists at the University of Dundee, where we have several comics modules, the unique Masters in Comics and Graphic Novels, and Dundee Comics Creative Space. Funds provided by the University allowed me to pay these talented artists to work on the project, and collaborating with them has been a joy and a privilege.

These stories feature characters like Alpha, Alpha Girl, Trixie, Doctor Oculus, and many more, who are presented as being genuine comics characters who have appeared in British comics since the 1930s. They are not. However, the stories are heavily inspired by actual comics. Likewise, fictional creators are sometimes referred to in fake interviews, contributing to this glimpse of an imaginary parallel world where a British superhero emerged in the 1930s and enjoyed massive success. However, as this book is intended to educate as well as entertain, there are also sections that provide historical information on British superhero comics from the 1930s to present. The information provided here is factual and based on my research. I hope you enjoy this book. And the next time someone says that Britain never had superheroes... set them right!

Huge thanks to all my collaborators, and all those who supported this project. Special thanks to Phillip Vaughan and Professor James Livesey, Dean of the School of Humanities, without whose support this book would not have been possible.

Dr Chris Murray

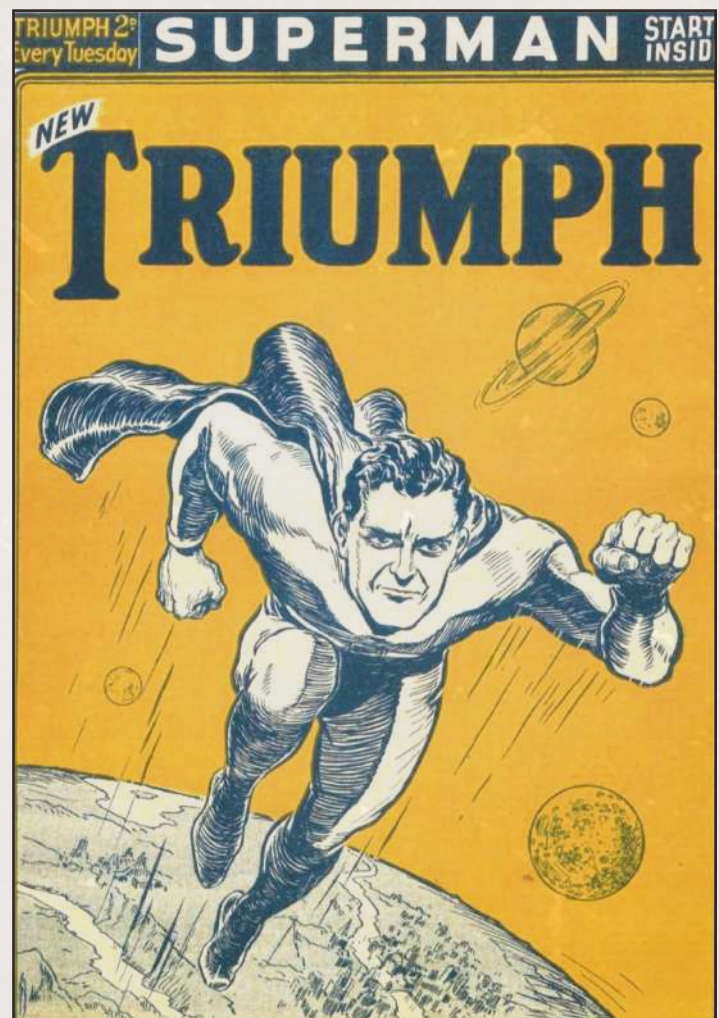
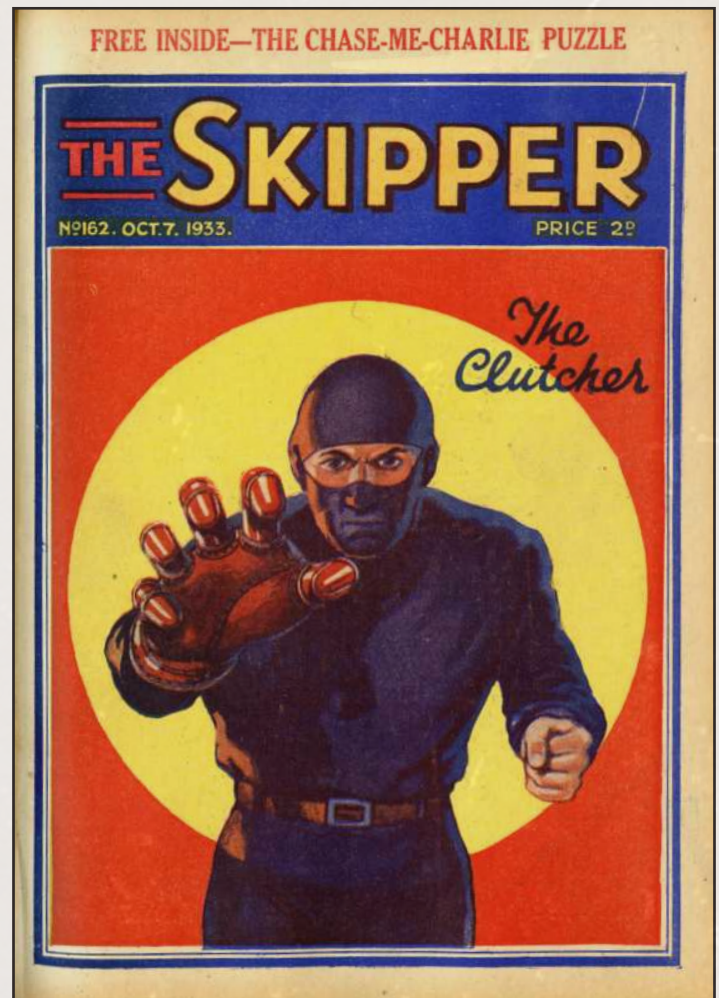
School of Humanities
University of Dundee,
Scotland.

1930s

In the closing decade of the nineteenth century Alfred Harmsworth revolutionised British comics by introducing weekly publications such as *Comic Cuts* and *Illustrated Chips* (both 1890-1953). These were enormously successful, leading Harmsworth to set up Amalgamated Press in 1901. This would firmly establish the marketplace for comics in Britain, and the AP style (images accompanied by text underneath) dominated British comics for decades. However, the influence of American newspaper strips was increasingly in evidence in Britain throughout the 1930s. The Funny paper sections from American newspapers were available, and British artists like Len Fullerton (who used the name Nat Brand for his comics work) produced comics in the American style.

In 1937 DC Thomson, which had cornered the market in weekly boy's adventure papers with their "Big Five" (*Adventure*, *Hotspur*, *Rover*, *Skipper*, and *Wizard*) took another step away from the AP style with *The Dandy*, which was joined in 1938 by *The Beano*. Both comics were hugely successful, creating a double act that dominated British humour comics for decades. Significantly, these anthology comics mixed the visually dynamic American style with the AP format and text stories. AP countered with reprints of Superman appearing in *Triumph* in 1939 and 1940, with covers by British artist Jock McCall. This was the first time Superman had been reprinted outside the US, however, the American superhero did not really take off in Britain. An import ban on America comics came into effect with the war, and the glamorous American comics become much harder to find.

This section contains a text story featuring Dick Dickson, which is modelled on the boy's adventure stories that featured in the weekly story papers. The cover of *Trump* (a reference to the fictional comic in the 1947 Ealing comedy *Hue and Cry* directed by Charles Crichton and starring Alastair Sim) mirrors the first appearance of Superman on the cover of *Triumph*. The Alpha origin story is told in the AP style that was still common in the late 1930s, with text underneath the images and no word balloons, thought bubbles or captions. There is also an interview with Nat Fullerton, the fictional creator of Alpha, who is loosely based on Len Fullerton/Nat Brand, with some influence from Jock McCall.



DETECTIVE DICK DICKSON, IN 'THE ARBROATH DEVIL'



Dickson heads north to face the evil Lord Cawley

As the train crept over the bridge Detective Dick Dickson, on loan to Scotland Yard from New York, gazed into the deep waters of the river below. He'd read about the rail bridge disaster that had happened years before in the late 1870s and imagined the plunge to icy death. A shiver went down his spine. He lifted his gaze and turned, watching the sunset off to the west. The sky was ablaze with pink, orange and a hint of red. As the sun slipped behind the hills night took hold and the train rattled into the station. Stepping onto the platform Dickson immediately spotted the man he'd been instructed to meet. You didn't have to be a detective to see that the bulk that had been squeezed into a new suit and a long, too-tight raincoat, was a policeman. Dickson stuck out his hand and threw his name and rank after it. Judging from the pained silence and the crush of a handshake he received in return this was a man who would be more comfortable beating a confession out of a suspect than wearing that suit. The man's thumb and little finger darted quickly across Dickson's hand. 'Mason', he thought, registering the brief look of disappointment that shot across the policeman's face upon not receiving the expected response. He released his grip on Dickson's paw and gestured towards the stairs.

'Car waiting' he grumbled.

Dickson picked up his small suitcase and followed. By the time they made it outside it was raining. Dickson threw this case into the back seat and climbed into the passenger's side. This was obviously not a police car. Perhaps the cop's own car. If so, he was doing well for himself. A bit better than he should be. The man mumbled something about the hotel being near.

Dickson glanced at him. 'So, we aren't going to the police station to meet Inspector Ferguson? I was told...'

'We don't need Yank help. And if we do, it can wait to the morning,' the cop interrupted.

Dickson looked out of the window. Unexpectedly, the big man continued.

'You're here because of what they say you did in New York.'

Dickson had heard it all before. The doubt, the ridicule. He cut to the point.

'Do you want to hear me say it?'

The cop glanced sideways at him, but kept his main attention on the road. Dickson told the short version.

'Yes, I saw the devil in a basement in Westchester. It looked like an octopus crossed with a man, and it was as big as hell. I shot it, it

screamed, and I woke up in hospital six weeks later with a weird tattoo and no memory of what happened in that basement.'

The big cop made a noise somewhere between a grunt and a laugh.

'And yes' Dickson continued, 'Most of the cops in New York think I lost my memory in a bottle, but if your superiors didn't believe me then I wouldn't be here.'

The car pulled up at the hotel and the policeman waved a hand that seemed to indicate that the conversation was over and that Dickson should get out. He did. As he started to walk away the cop shouted after him and pushing a file towards him. Dickson took it and headed into the hotel, gravitating towards the bar. He sipped whisky as he read the file. So this was why he'd been dragged all the way up from London. The files recorded the mysterious deaths of several witnesses over the last year, most of them connected somehow to talk of cults and devil worship. One claimed to have seen a dragon in the forest north of the city. There was even a blurry photograph of... something. He closed the file.

In the morning a mist was rising off the river. The cop was waiting outside in the car and it looked like he had been there for a while. Dickson noticed that he wore the same clothes and hadn't shaved. Someone hadn't been home last night.

'Interesting reading' Dickson offered, tapping the file as the car crept through the quiet streets. The cop ignored him for a few minutes, then muttered.

'Boss says we head straight out to Hospitalfields. That's the country house in Arbroath where Lord Cawley lives.'

Dickson frowned. 'I'm starting to get the impression that no-one in your department wants to meet the Yank crackpot.'

The cop smiled faintly. 'You should have been a detective.'

Dickson tipped back his hat and stared out the window, taking in the view as they left the city behind and sped through the countryside. The mist had lifted and it was turning into a pleasant morning. Nothing else for it but to enjoy the ride, he decided. When they pulled into the long driveway Dickson recognised the house but couldn't quite place the memory. Perhaps it had been in the file? No, it felt like a memory from a dream. He shifted in his seat. The butler met them at the door and the cop pushed past him. Not his first time here. As Dickson followed he barely registered that the butler was holding something. He was quick. The blow floored Dickson immediately. The world swam around him as he slipped into unconsciousness.



When Dickson awoke he was lying on a different floor, on a thick rug of Eastern design. He winced as he felt the bump on the back of his head. Sitting up he saw that he was in a library, and that he wasn't alone. The big cop was there. He was dead. An ornate knife had been plunged into his chest. Oddly, he had a smile on his face. Judging from the shadows, and the glimpse of the outside world that he could see through the window, hours had passed. It was early evening. Then Dickson realised that there was someone else in the room. A woman stepped from the shadows. She was short and flame-haired, and her eyes darted around nervously.

'Your friend was sacrificed. And now you will be too.' She glanced to the window. There were sounds of something being erected outside. Some structure. The sound of a hammer on wood. The crackle of a fire being started.

The woman continued, 'He's impressed that you've met one of the Old Ones'. Dickson started to realise how terrified the woman was, and that she might be an ally. 'My husband thinks that if you burn the thing you met in New York might take notice and come through for him.'

'Cawley is... your husband?' Dickson managed. The woman frowned, disappointed. Dickson felt a flush of embarrassment. Beautiful women were a particular weakness of his.

'Yes, I am Lady Laura Findlay-Cawley... but if you want out of this you'll need to...'

A man walked into the room. She trembled and fell silent.

'Detective Dickson, a pleasure', Cawley smiled. He was dressed in colourful silk robes. They looked Chinese and there was a dragon emblazoned on them. He wore a heavy amulet with a strange symbol. 'I am sure my wife has explained that I need you to tell me everything about your encounter in New York'. Dickson's eyes were fixed on the amulet. Without being able to stop himself, the story poured. The long version.

It was hours later when Dickson stopped talking. Cawley had listened to every detail with rapt attention. He smiled as he rose, leading his wife out of the library. It took Dickson a while to gather himself. Looking at his dead companion he tried to figure out how long it would be till Inspector Ferguson realised they were missing. Then the penny dropped. No one knew he was here. Two burley men entered. Dickson started to put up a fight but it was useless. He was dragged down a corridor and into another room. There were tapestries on the wall. More dragons, and a knight being devoured. There was an old table in the centre of the room with various arcane artefacts and an old book.

The men forced Dickson onto the table and held him down. Cawley entered with a huge grin, wielding the same ornate knife that has until recently been lodged in the big cop's chest.

'So, let's get down to it Detective'. He stood over Dickson and raised the knife. 'I take your life here, and then we'll go outside and burn the soul out of you, and we'll see what happens then...'

Dickson felt the scream catch in his throat. He tried to wriggle away but the two men held him fast. Cawley pulled up Dickson's sleeve and found the tattoo. He touched the point of the blade to the strange design, and all hell broke loose. The men holding Dickson were thrown away. Dickson heard their bones break as they hit the walls. Cawley seemed to be in the grip of some terrible force. The hand which held the blade was crushed, then the arm. Dickson could see ribs snapping and the terror on the old man's face. Cawley's wife ran into the room and screamed. The invisible force slammed her to the wall and she fell, dead. Whatever was in the room wasn't quite in the shape of a man. It tore around like the wind, then seemed to slip inside an ancient suit of armour, which shuddered to life as if propelled by a tornado rattling around inside it. The thing clanked over to Cawley's broken body. The dark magician was writhing in agony but still seemed to regard the creature with admiration and awe. The possessed suit of armour pulled a sword off the wall and in an instant Cawley's head was struck from his shoulders. An apparition appeared, hovering above the suit of armour. It was a huge eyeball, and its gaze darted around the room. An armoured hand picked up Cawley's head. A voice that was not a voice said 'You are mine now'.

Dickson awoke on a beach. It was morning, and very cold. He looked around and could just make out the roof of Cawley's house about a mile away. Dickson stumbled down to the icy water and splashed some on his face. There were large pieces of wood floating in the water. Some had been pushed up on the beach. Wreckage. Dickson thought he glimpsed a body floating. Then he saw another further down the beach. A wallet lay at his feet, soaked through. He picked it up and found a train ticket there, along with a photograph of a young man, a sailor. On the back of the photograph a date had been scrawled. It said 'December 1879'.

**NEXT WEEK: DETECTIVE DICKSON RETURNS IN
"THE CASSANDRA COMPLEX!"**

TRUMP 2^p
Every Tuesday

ALPHA

**STARTS
INSIDE**

**GIANT-
SIZED!**

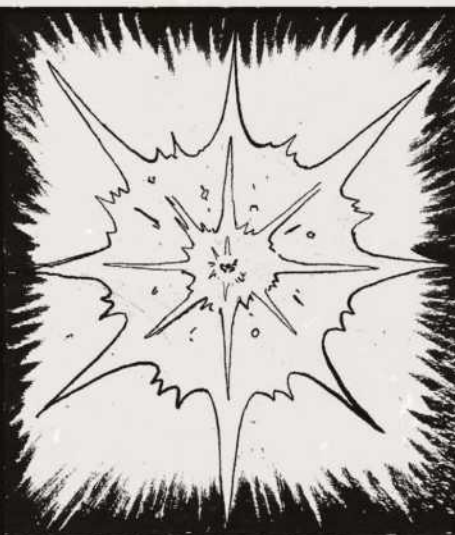
TRUMP



INTRODUCING THE ORIGINAL BRITISH SUPERHERO



1/ At MILLS OBSERVATORY in DUNDEE, scientists observe a curious phenomenon - a bright light in the night sky from the solar system closest to ours.



2/ Suddenly there is colossal flash of light in the night sky. Something rockets towards the Earth.



3/ The stunned scientists observe a falling star, streaking through the night.



4/ It falls into the North Sea, then an eerie calm descends.



5/ Slowly, something that appears to be a man, emerges from the depths.



6/ Here was ALPHA! Born in the stars and with no memory of his former life but driven by a desire for justice.



7/ To make his way in the world, ALPHA takes a name, NAT FULLERTON, and a job as a CARTOONIST.



8/ By day he draws thrilling adventure stories, but when no one is looking...



9/ **ALPHA SOARS!**

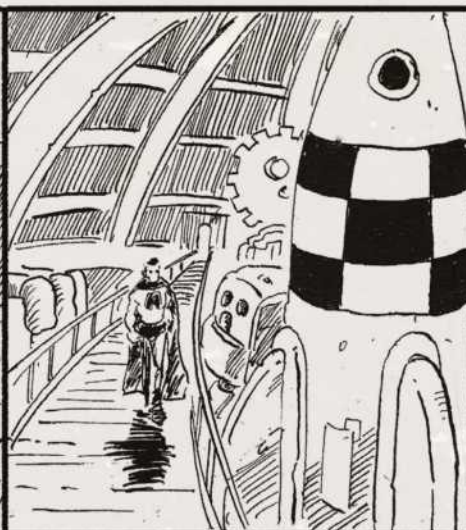
MORE ALPHA NEXT WEEK



1/ Alpha's secret base lies deep inside "The Law," an extinct volcano at the heart of the city.



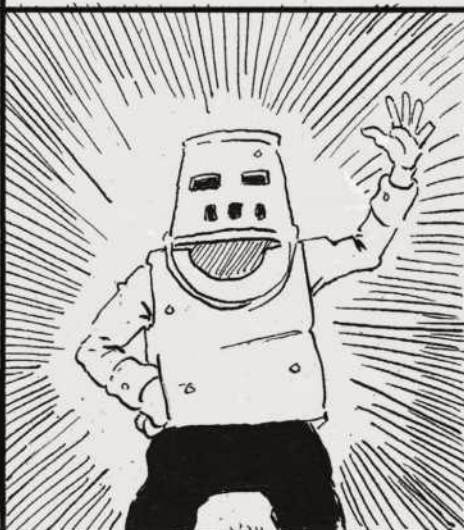
2/ He enters by a secret door on the north side of the hill, which is surrounded by trees.



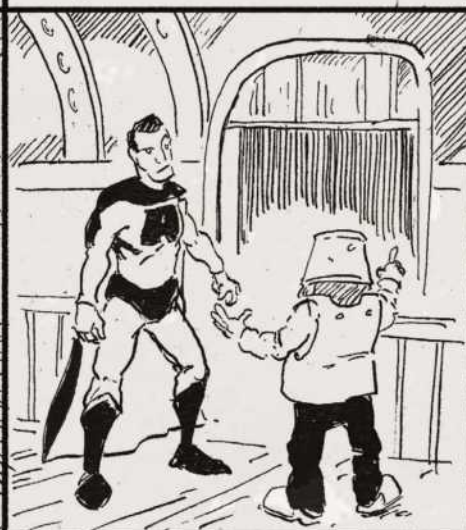
3/ Within the secret caverns of the base, ALPHA conceals an arsenal of weapons and gadgets which serve him in his war against evil.



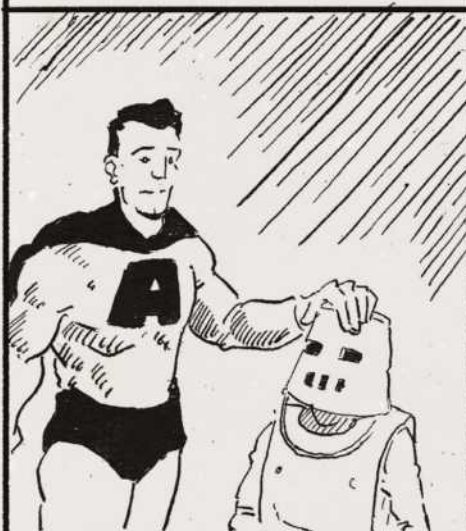
4/ But something is amiss - ALPHA'S keen senses detect the presence of a stranger in his lair!



5/ The intruder is revealed - a youngster who announces "I am BUCKET BOY! - let me aid you in your battle against evil."



6/ ALPHA demands to know how this boy gained entry to his secret lair. BUCKET BOY shows ALPHA a secret tunnel that even he is unaware of.



7/ "You are brave and resourceful young man," ALPHA tells his unwanted guest, "But I cannot have a partner. I work alone."



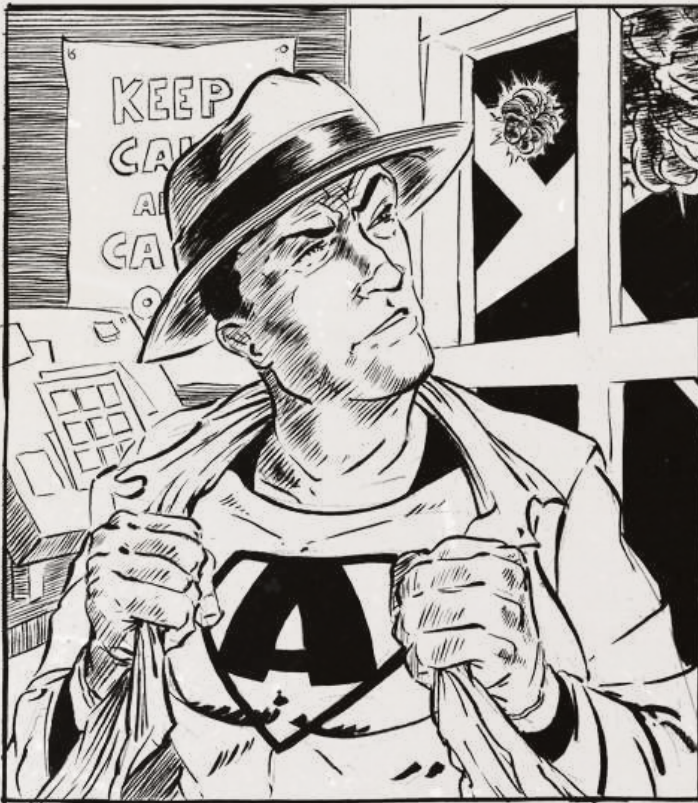
8/ ALPHA fixes BUCKET BOY with his hypnotic "MESMA-STARE," and removes all memory of finding ALPHA's secret base.



9/ Fighting crime is a lonely business, but ALPHA knows that children everywhere support him by getting TRUMP each week!

Interview with Nat Fullerton

This interview with Alpha creator Nat Fullerton was conducted in 1968, shortly before his death, though was not printed until 1975, when it appeared in the fanzine *The Black Hole*. The interviewers are George Cordiero and Jim Stewart, who later went on to found Black Hole Press. Note: due to the extremely poor reproduction quality of the fanzine some words are illegible. Where necessary we have provided what we believe to be the most likely word based on the context.



GC: Hello Nathan. Thank you for taking the time to talk to me about your career in comics. I appreciate that you are not in the best of health, so we'll take it slow.

NF: My pleasure. Ask away.

GC: Well, we have to start with Alpha. How did he come about?

NF: Well, you actually have to go back a bit further, to *Trump*. They had done lots of war stories and school stories for years but they wanted something in the American style. I was drawing spot illustrations for *Trump*. It was a boy's weekly, so it was a text story you understand. One of the editors wanted a detective story, so Ed Moony and I set about it. Ed was a writer, very interested in the occult. A devil for the drink though. We roughed out an idea in a pub.

JS: This was in Dundee?

NF: Yes, in a pub called... The Phoenix. Great place. So, we came up with this character called Detective Rick Dickson (who became Dick Dickson), who was supposed to be an American working for Scotland Yard. He investigated a dark magician [coughs]. That was the character that became Doc Oculus, as you know.

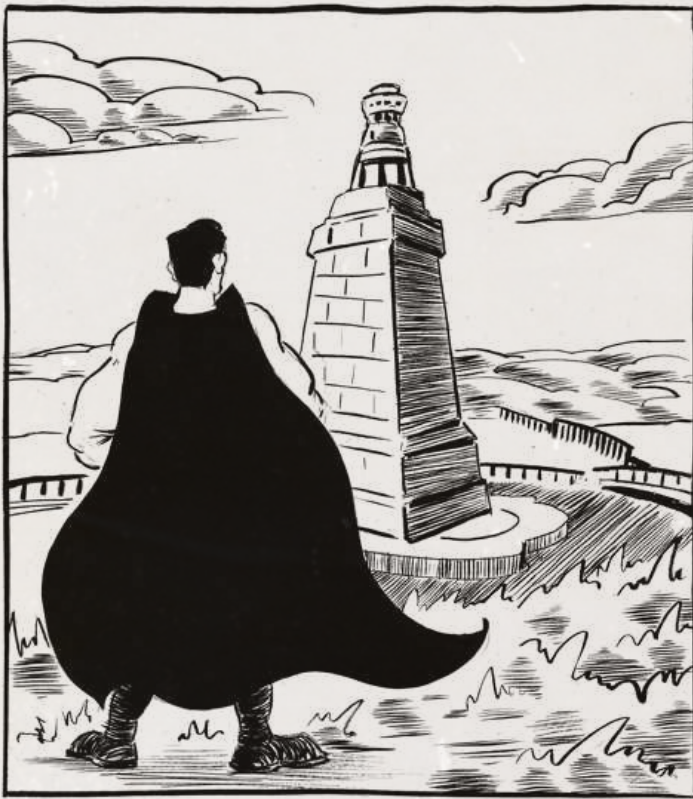
JS: So, you had the villain before the superhero?

NF: Oh Yes, we were always better with the villains than the heroes. Anyway, the editor hated it. Thought it was still too British. He said he didn't want Sexton Blake with an American accent, so that didn't last long. Ed was gone soon after. He tried to start up a Union with his brother, who was an artist at Thoms and Sons. They were soon out on their arses and off to London to work for the competition.

GC: And Alpha?

NF: I needed something to work on so, so I kept thinking of how to make the next thing more 'American'. We'd had a letter come into the office from Cleveland from a couple of kids who had an idea about an adventurer with superpowers. The editor replied to them saying that the company preferred to use local talent, but he kept on at me about the idea. It was on my mind anyway as I had been reading *Odd John* by Olaf Stapledon. This was 1936. It was a lovely summer day and I did what I always did on a Saturday morning, I went off to Tentsmuir beach to draw. I was sketching otters, birds, seals, and finishing off *Odd John* when it came to me. Alpha. I drew him quickly and wrote some notes. I ran off back to Dundee immediately and went





into the office to slam this down on the editor's desk. Of course he was at the football, so I didn't see him till the following Monday. But in my excited state I must have made quite an impression on his new young secretary, Maggie, as she later became my wife!

GC: Alpha first appeared in *Trump* in 1938, so it took a while to come out. Why the delay?

NF: Editors! You give them exactly what they want and then they get nervous. And I got married, and then there was the war. I tried to join up but I had back problems. They put us to work doing lots of propaganda comics and drawings for the newspapers though, so I felt like I did my bit. And of course I got a lot of war stuff into Alpha when the strip was in *Trump*, before paper rationing put an end to that.

JS: Did you expect Alpha to be a success?

NF: It wasn't to begin with. Readers hated it. But slowly things improved. The ban on imports of American comics helped. Kids who wanted superheroes but couldn't get them had to make do. Eventually they came to love him, but that was in the postwar years.

GC: I must ask about the fact that you put yourself in the story.

NF: Alpha needed an alter ego. My wife suggested I call him by my name and make him a comic artist. She was such a little imp. She knew it would wind up the editors. It did! This was part of the hold up.

GC: And what made them go for it?

NF: They didn't! But the editor-in-chief was a family member of the owners, a Thoms, and he was always taking long holidays. The publication of the first story came when he was off on holiday and I saw my chance and convinced the other editors that he'd agreed to it [laughter].

GC: Did you get in trouble?

NF: Of course, they were furious, but then the editor was promoted out of the comics into the newspapers so he forgot all about me.

JS: Lucky!

NF: Yes, but I'll tell you what really bothered them. They thought I was using this as a way to get around the fact that none of the artists were allowed to sign their work. A few artists were annoyed at me for that too. But they got over it. Especially when others started to take over the drawing. My back and eyes were playing up and I had a young daughter, so I was slowing down just as the demand for more Alpha stories was reaching its height just after the war. These were great times.

GC: Great. We'll end there for the moment. Can we pick this up again in a couple of weeks? We have so much more to ask.

NF: Of course. I look forward to it.

ENDS NB: A second interview never appeared in *The Black Hole Fanzine*, and it is not known if any others were conducted, although Fullerton died a few months later.

1940s

In the 1940s American comics were a lot harder to obtain in Britain due to the war. Comics were also under constant pressure due to paper and ink rationing, which put an end to comics like *Triumph*, where reprints of Superman had first appeared. However, several small publishers like Gerald Swan and Paget in London, Cardal in Manchester, and Cartoon Art Productions in Glasgow, sprang up and several tried their hand at superhero comics. Others like Len Miller and Son got around the import ban by importing the printing plates rather than comics themselves, producing British editions of American material, such as the extremely popular Captain Marvel stories. Creators like Denis Gifford, Bob Monkhouse and Mick Anglo started to appear, and the superhero comics they produced ranged from amateur copies of American comics to accomplished satire and parody of this material. In the main British creators tended to produce distorted versions of the superhero, reflecting an ambivalence about the earnest heroism and patriotism of the American models.

A key moment came in 1944 when the Amazing Mr X appeared in DC Thomson's *The Dandy*, drawn by Jack Glass. Here was a British superhero based very closely on Superman, but with rather more modest powers and adventures. There are clues in the stories that rather than being produced in 1944 these comics were created in 1939, probably as a means of countering the Superman strips appearing in the rival comic *Triumph*, but when it folded there was no need for the Amazing Mr X, so he was likely forgotten about then pulled out of a filing cabinet towards the end of the war when there was a lack of material, given that many creators were off at the front.

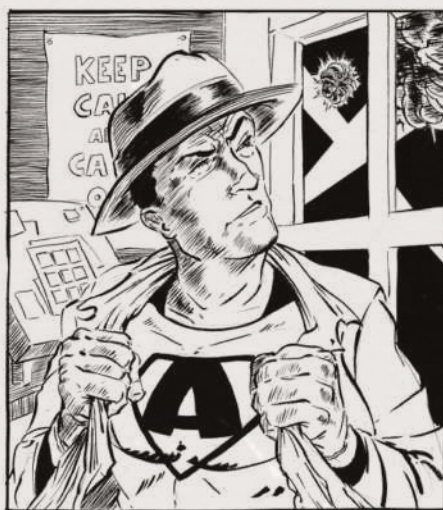
This section contains a wartime Alpha story modelled on the Amazing Mr X stories. There are also three covers that are based on independent British superhero comics that appeared in the mid to late 1940s. Two of the covers are based on artwork produced by Dennis M. Reader, a talented artist who worked for Cartoon Art Productions and who could mirror the American adventure comic style. The third cover offers a version of a comic by Monkhouse (one which famously revealed his wicked, and very rude, sense of humour).



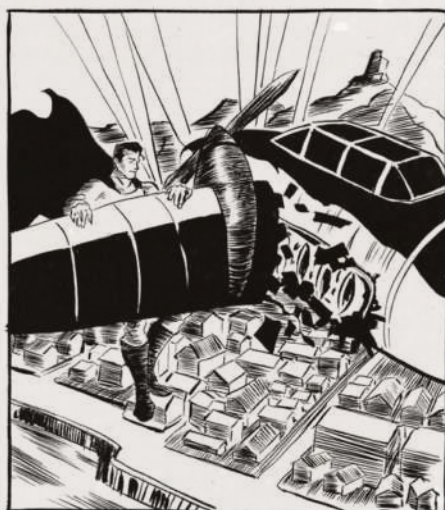
A LONE ENEMY PLANE, AND A MYSTERY CLOSE TO HOME



A NAZI PLANE WEAVES BETWEEN THE FLAK AND SPOTLIGHTS OF DUNDEE'S WARTIME DEFENCES.



IN HIS OFFICE AT MACCAIL'S ART STUDIO NAT FULLERTON HEARS THE BATTLE RAGING OVERHEAD AND BURSTS INTO ACTION, AS ALPHA!



THE SUPER-NORMAL ALPHA MAKES SHORT WORK OF THE ENEMY PLANE, SENDING IT SPIRALLING TOWARDS THE GROUND BELOW.



ALPHA HELPS THE SOLDIERS PULL THE PILOT FROM THE WRECKAGE AND IS SHOCKED TO FIND THAT IT IS NONE OTHER THAN RUDOLPH HESS OF NAZI HIGH COMMAND!



A QUICK SEARCH OF HESS REVEALS THAT HE IS CARRYING SEVERAL LETTERS IN A STRANGE CODE. ONE IS ADDRESSED TO A MYSTERIOUS FIGURE WHO LIVES NEARBY.



FULLERTON TAKES THE SHORT TRAIN JOURNEY TO HOSPITALFIELD HOUSE, AN EERIE PLACE THAT WAS ONCE A HOSPITAL FOR PLAGUE VICTIMS.



THERE HE MEETS DR. OCULUS, AN OLD MAGICIAN WITH AN ODD TATTOO ON HIS FOREHEAD.



WHEN FULLERTON MENTIONS THE LETTER, DR. OCULUS'S DEMEANOUR CHANGES AND HE USES MAGICAL POWERS TO HYPNOTIZE FULLERTON.



FULLERTON AWAKENS THE NEXT MORNING WITH NO MEMORY OF WHAT HAPPENED. HE IS ONCE AGAIN AT HIS DESK AT MACCAIL STUDIOS.

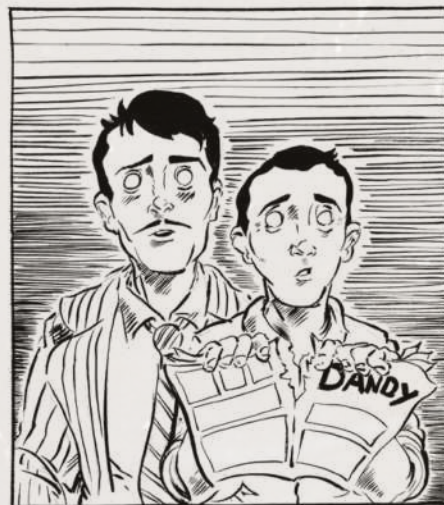
A DIABOLICAL PLAN, THWARTED BY ALPHA



TO HIS HORROR HE SEES THAT UNDER DR. OCULUS'S POWER HE HAS SPENT THE NIGHT DRAWING PRO-HITLER COMICS. HE INSTANTLY REALISES THE FOUL PLAN.



AT THAT MOMENT, OUTSIDE THE HEADQUARTERS OF THE COUNTRY'S MOST ILLUSTRIOUS PUBLISHER OF NEWSPAPERS AND COMICS, DR. OCULUS WORKS HIS EVIL MAGIC.



FOLLOWING THE INSTRUCTIONS IN THE CODED LETTERS, THE MAGICIAN HYPNOTISES THE STAFF IN THE BUILDING. IN MERE MOMENTS THEY WILL BE UNDER HIS POWER FOREVER!



BUT DR. OCULUS HAS RECKONED WITHOUT THE AWESOME MENTAL POWERS OF ALPHA!



THE STEADFAST HERO, WHOSE MIND COULD NEVER REALLY BE CONTROLLED BY THE POWER OF HITLERISM, STRIKES BACK!



SOON, HESS AND OCULUS SHARE A PRISON CELL. THE HEROIC ALPHA HAS SAVED THE DAY.



BACK IN HIS CIVILIAN GUISE OF ARTIST NAT FULLERTON, OUR HERO RESUMES HIS JOB, CREATING WHOLESOME STORY PAPERS TO ENTERTAIN THE NATION'S YOUTH.



BUT AS ALPHA HE IS EVER VIGILANT, A SENTINEL OF OUR SHORES, AND PROTECTOR OF LIBERTY AND THE EMPIRE.



NEXT WEEK:

X MARKS THE SPOT AS A DANDY NEW SUPER-NORMAL CHARACTER IS REVEALED!

THOMAS & SON
PRESENTS

SUPER-ALPHA

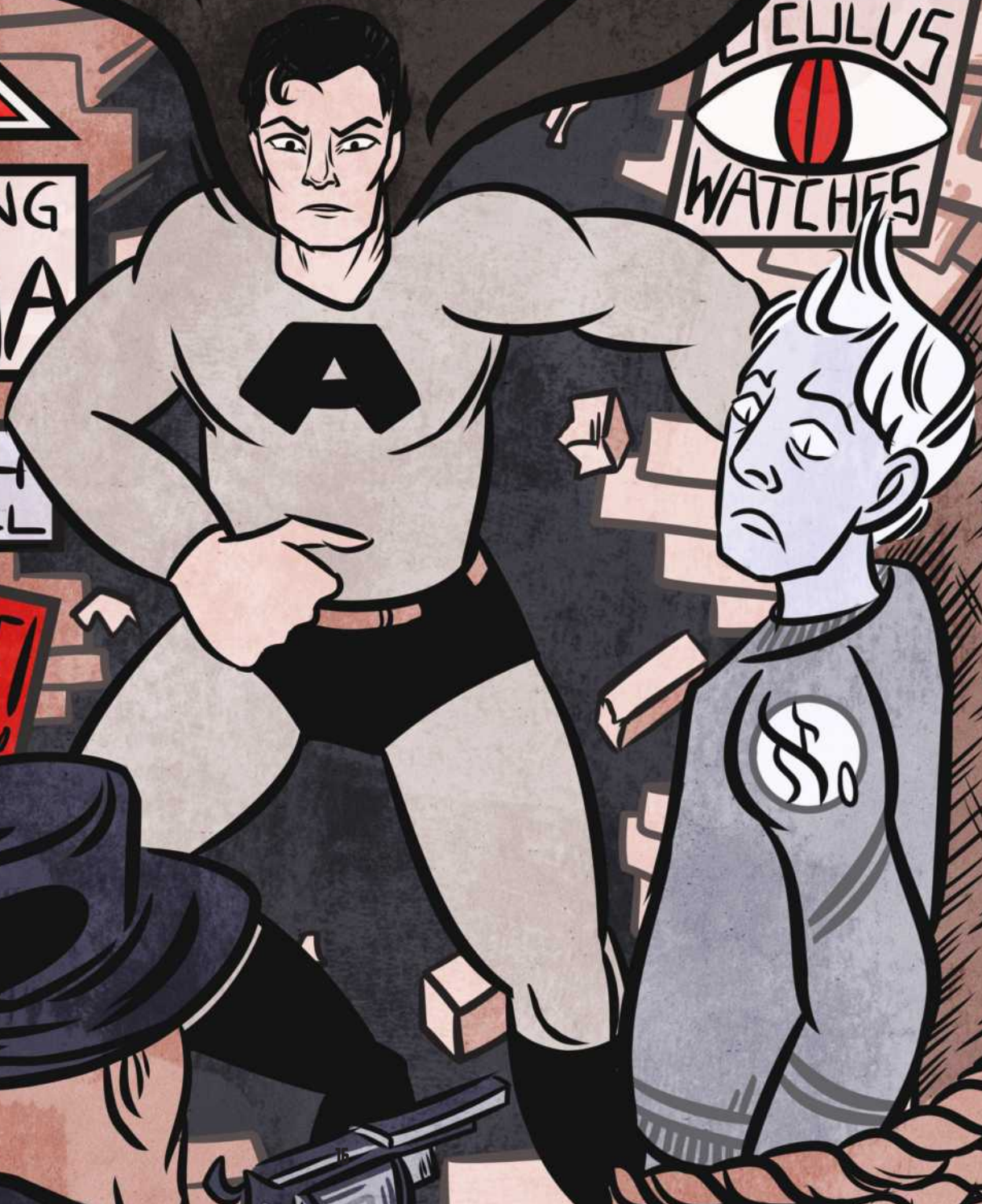


STARRING
ALPHA

and

ALEPH
NULL

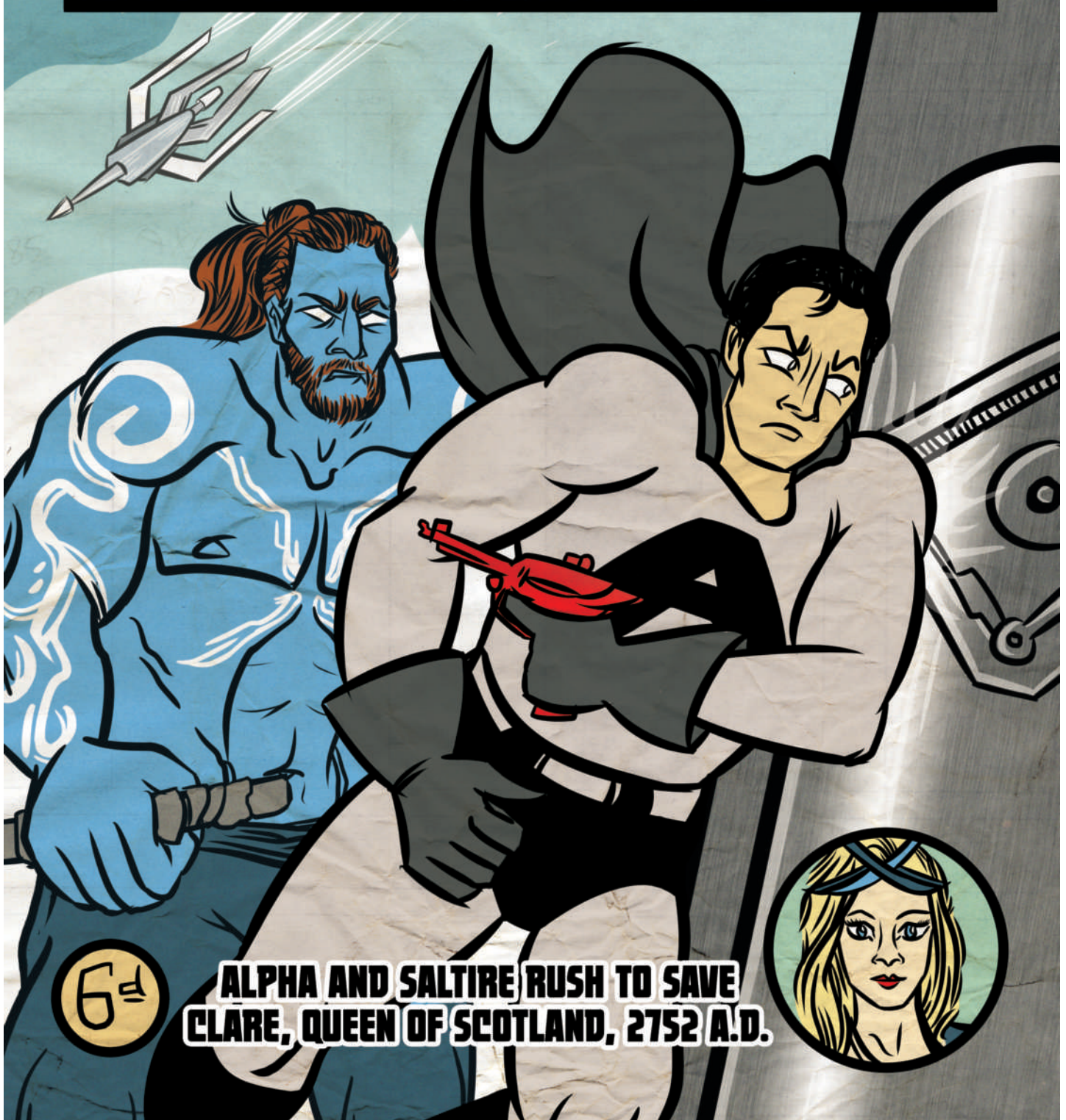
&
MORE!





SUPER-ALPHA **THRILLER**

FEATURING THE CALEDONIAN COLOSSUS-SALTIRE!



**ALPHA AND SALTIRE RUSH TO SAVE
CLARE, QUEEN OF SCOTLAND, 2752 A.D.**

NUMBER TWO ALPHA IN

DYNAMAX!

THE PUNCH OF
PACKED PAPER THRILLS
AND FUN

ALPHA
ON THE PLANET OF THE
FAMONS

3^D

STORY AND
ART BY
Damon

NO! THIS IS NOT SOME
CRAZY "IMAGINARY"
STORY —

ALPHA IS MAROONED ON
THE PLANET OF THE
DASTARDLY FAMONS!
BUT HOW DID HE END UP
HERE? LET'S START
AT THE
BEGINNING

EARTH, THE PREVIOUS DAY, ALPHA, IN
HIS CIVILIAN GUISE VISITS PROF HANSEN

ALPHA! I'VE JUST HEARD
THROUGH MY INTERSTELLAR
COMMUNISCOPE THAT HUNDREDS
OF BEAUTIFUL AMAZON
WOMEN ARE BEING HELD
CAPTIVE ON
THE PLANET
OF THE EVIL
FAMONS!

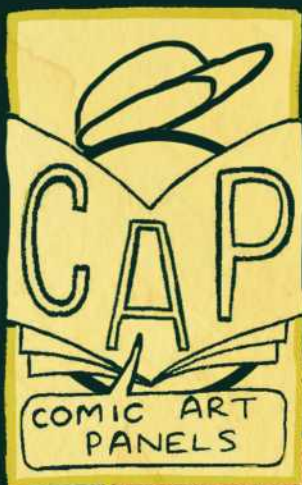
I'LL GET MY
SPACESHIP!

1950s

In the 1950s the post war baby boom saw an enormous rise in the number of children in Britain, and in the absence of computer games and television, comics ruled supreme in juvenile entertainment (and were read by many adults too). The big publishers prospered, and a number of smaller independent publishers also thrived, many of them dabbling in superheroes. It was also the time when the hugely popular reprints of the American Captain Marvel comics came to an abrupt halt following the court case in which DC Comics, the publisher of Superman, successfully argued that Captain Marvel, who now outsold Superman, was plagiarism. When the American material dried up Len Miller and Son, who had been reprinting these stories in Britain, approached Mick Anglo to produce similar material with a character called Marvelman. Anglo's studio produced a phenomenal amount of work and he would go on to create several more superhero characters in the 1950s.

This section contains a story drawn by Letty Wilson which is set in London in the mid-1950s at the launch of the 'This is Tomorrow' exhibition at the Whitechapel Gallery. This was a key event in the emergence of British Pop Art. Like American Pop Art, the work of British artists like Richard Hamilton and Peter Blake included references to comics. However, whereas the work of Roy Lichtenstein and Andy Warhol appropriated this imagery the British artists had a quite different relationship to this material, commenting on the appeal of the glamorous products of American mass culture. Moreover, there was a similarity between the commentary on American comics by the British Pop artists and the critiques and parodies offered by British comics creators who referenced the American comics style in their publications. Some of these comics even masqueraded as American comics by including cents prices to suggest that they were the prized and glamorous American publications sought by British readers whose access to such material was curtailed by the import ban, which lasted long after the end of the war. This section also contains a parody of an Electroman comic by Elliot Balson, in which the author appears as the villain Doc Holiday!





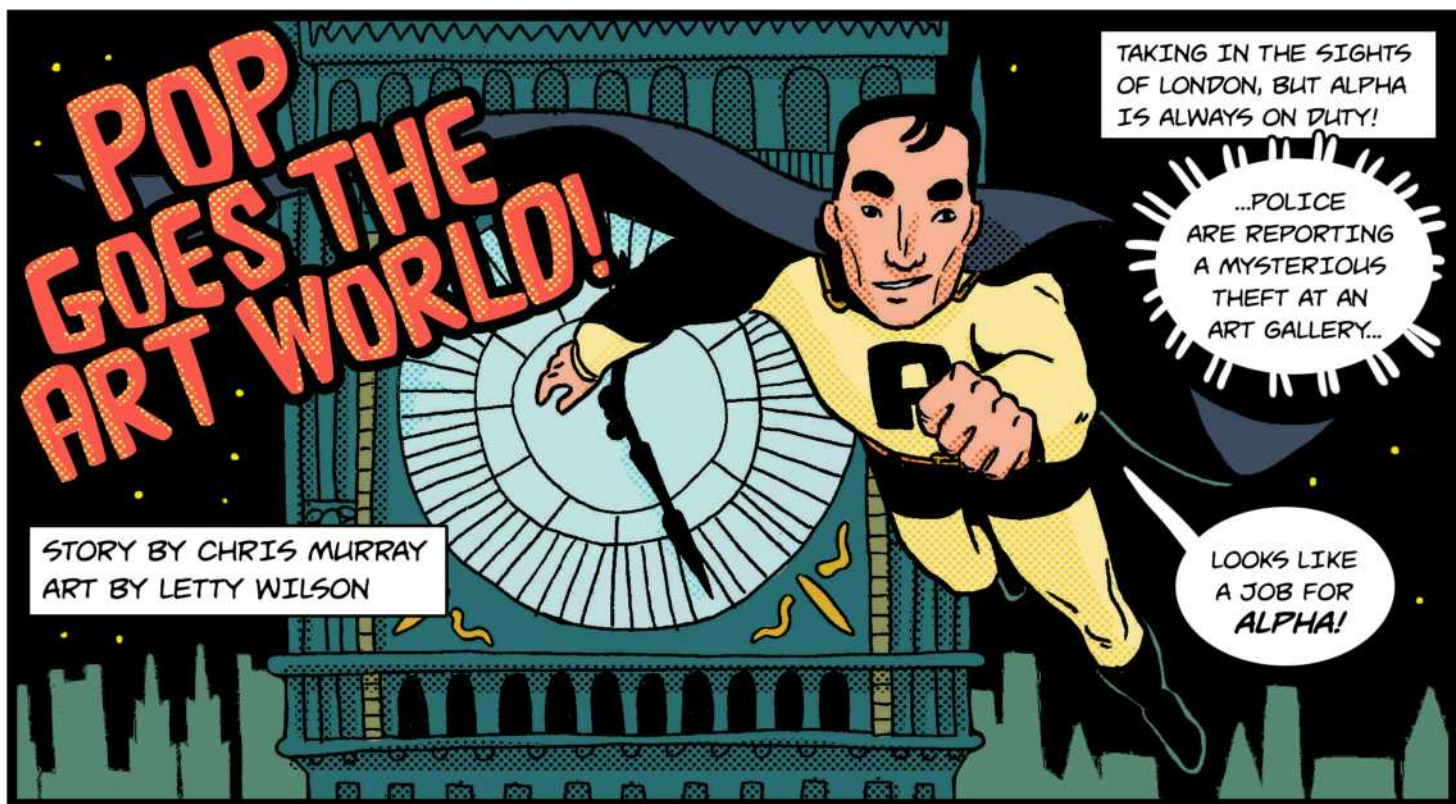
BIG WHOOP

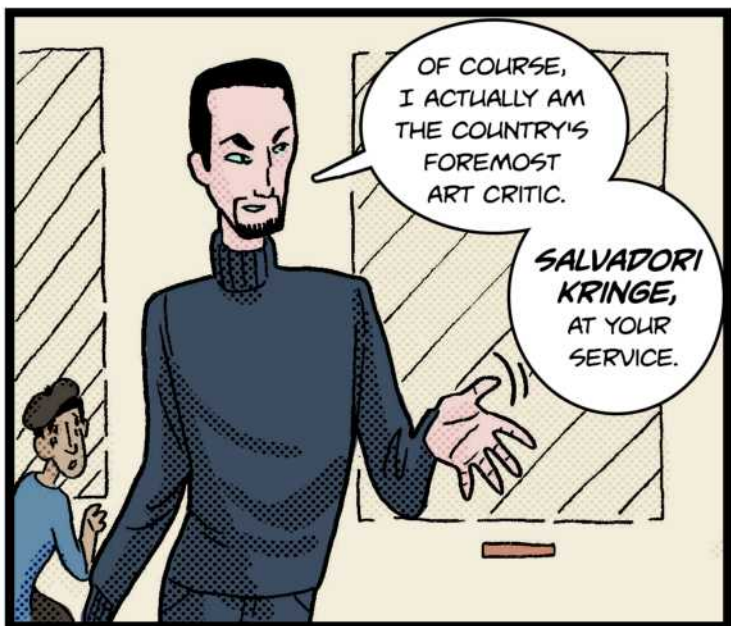
COMICS

FEATURING

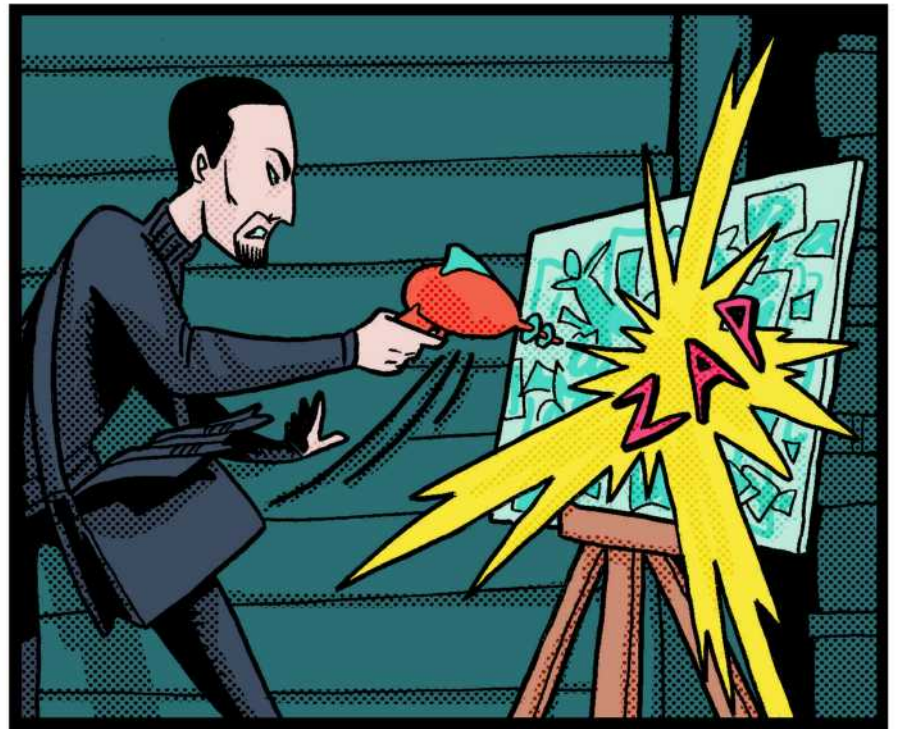
ALPHA

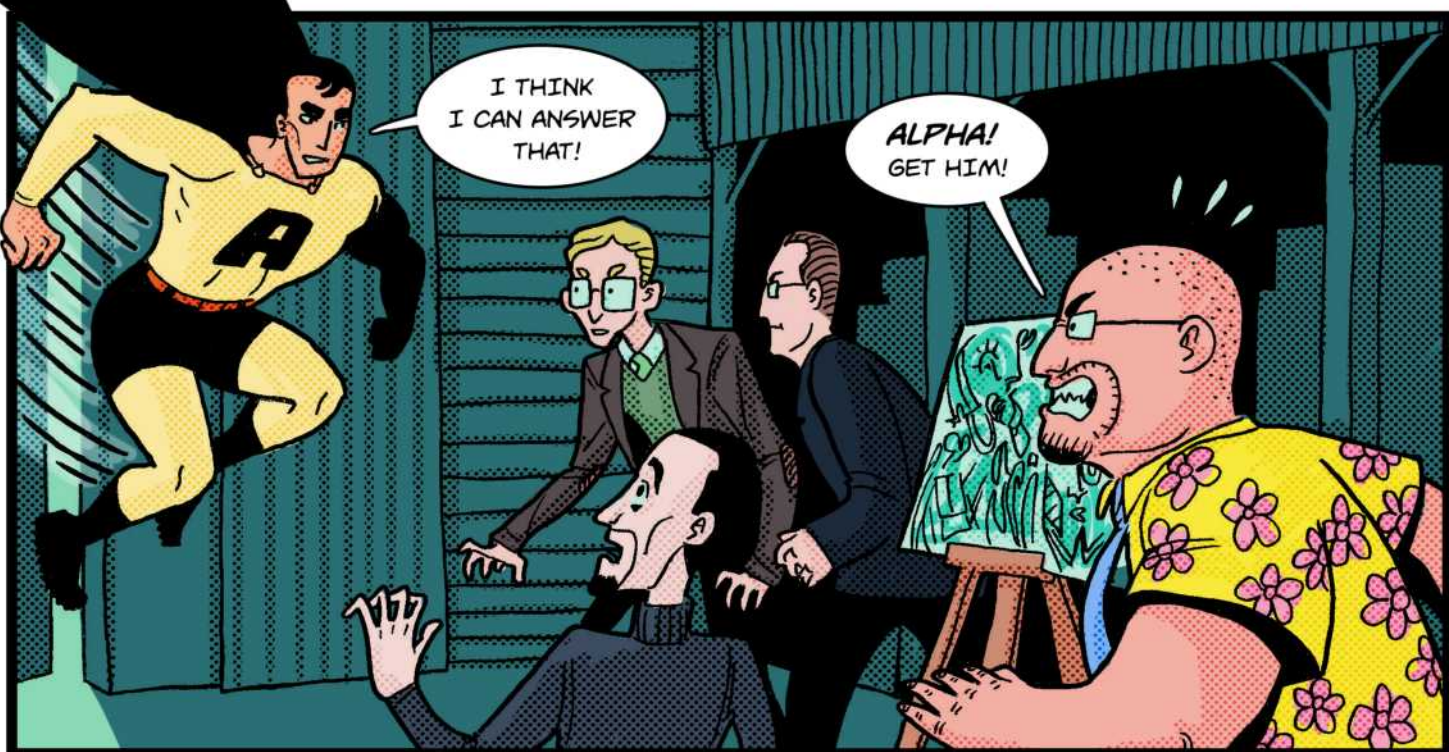
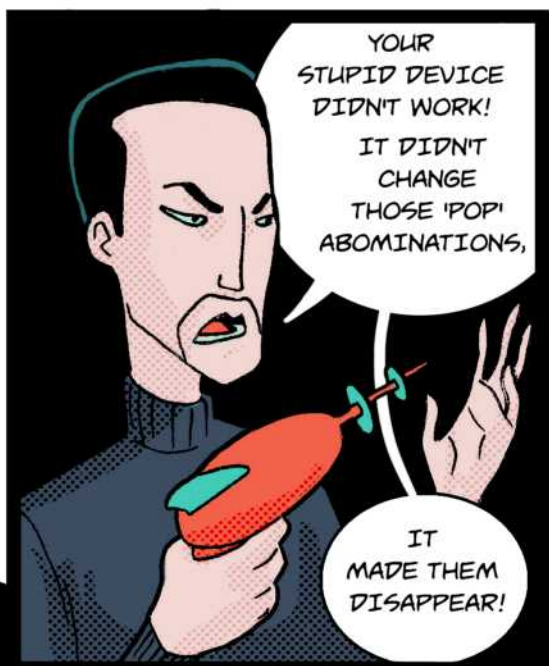


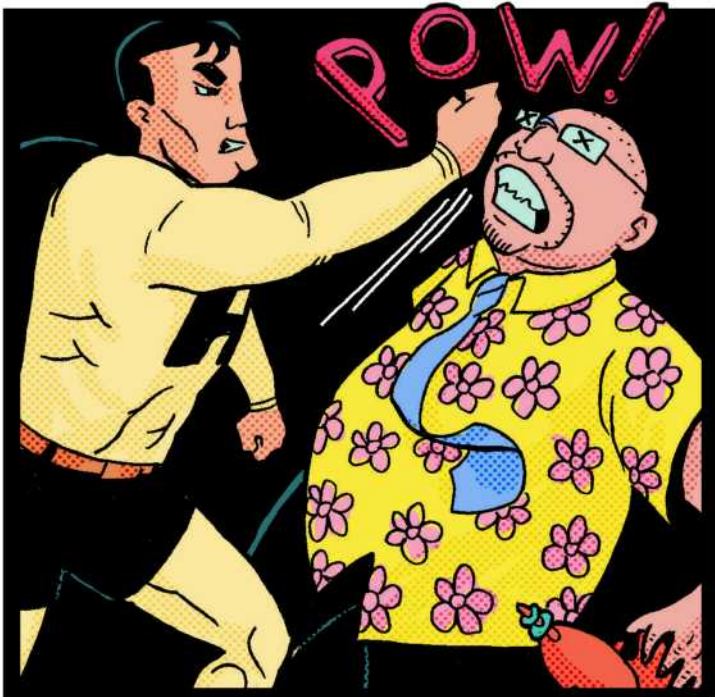










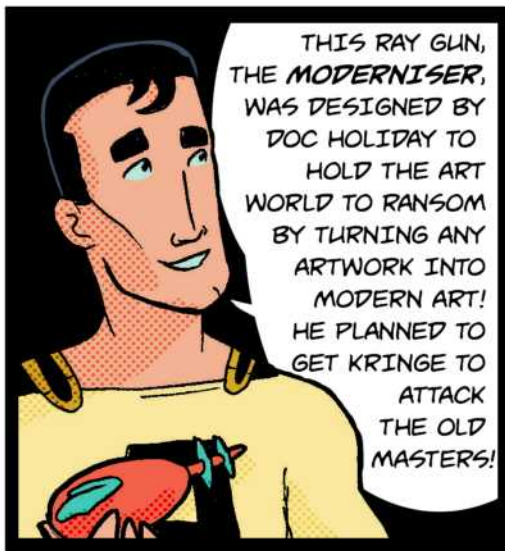




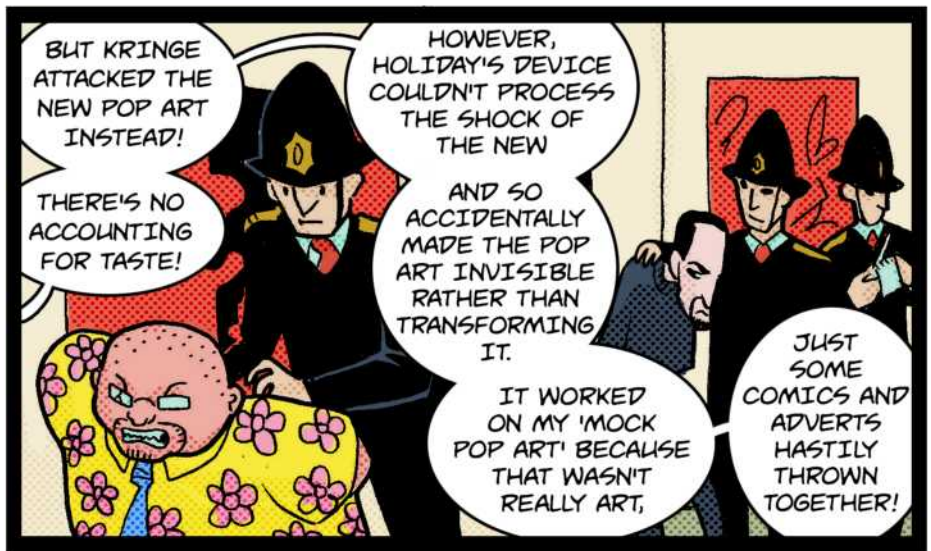
THIS SHOULD DO THE TRICK!



THE PAINTINGS ARE BACK!



THIS RAY GUN, THE **MODERNISER**, WAS DESIGNED BY DOC HOLIDAY TO HOLD THE ART WORLD TO RANSOM BY TURNING ANY ARTWORK INTO MODERN ART! HE PLANNED TO GET KRINGE TO ATTACK THE OLD MASTERS!



BUT KRINGE ATTACKED THE NEW POP ART INSTEAD!

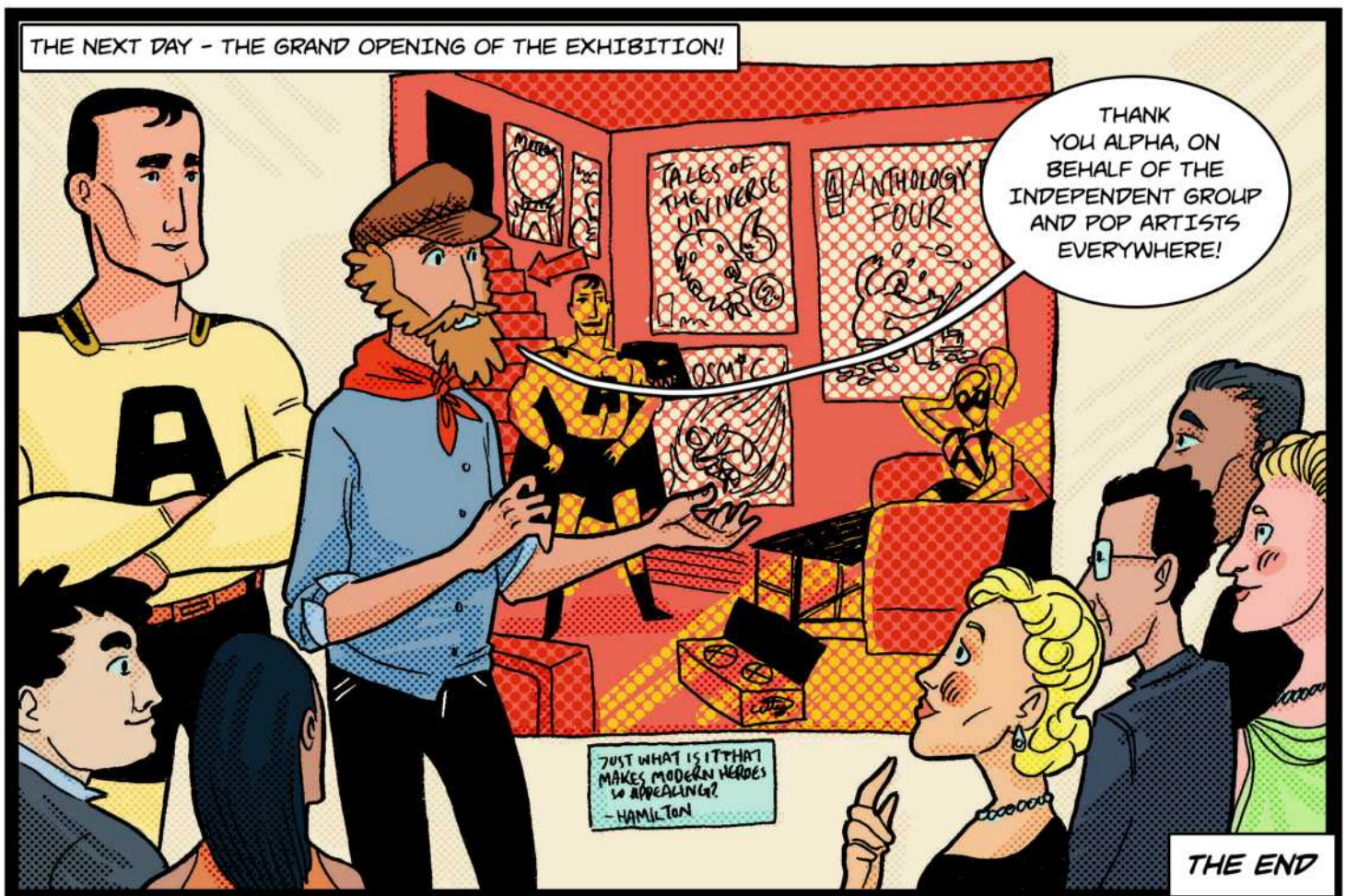
THERE'S NO ACCOUNTING FOR TASTE!

HOWEVER, HOLIDAY'S DEVICE COULDN'T PROCESS THE SHOCK OF THE NEW

AND SO ACCIDENTALLY MADE THE POP ART INVISIBLE RATHER THAN TRANSFORMING IT.

IT WORKED ON MY 'MOCK POP ART' BECAUSE THAT WASN'T REALLY ART,

JUST SOME COMICS AND ADVERTS HASTILY THROWN TOGETHER!



THE NEXT DAY - THE GRAND OPENING OF THE EXHIBITION!

THANK YOU ALPHA, ON BEHALF OF THE INDEPENDENT GROUP AND POP ARTISTS EVERYWHERE!

JUST WHAT IS IT THAT MAKES MODERN HEROES SO APPEALING?
- HAMILTON

THE END

UNIVERSE COMICS

ALPHA
VS
DOC HOLIDAY
AND HIS GANG!



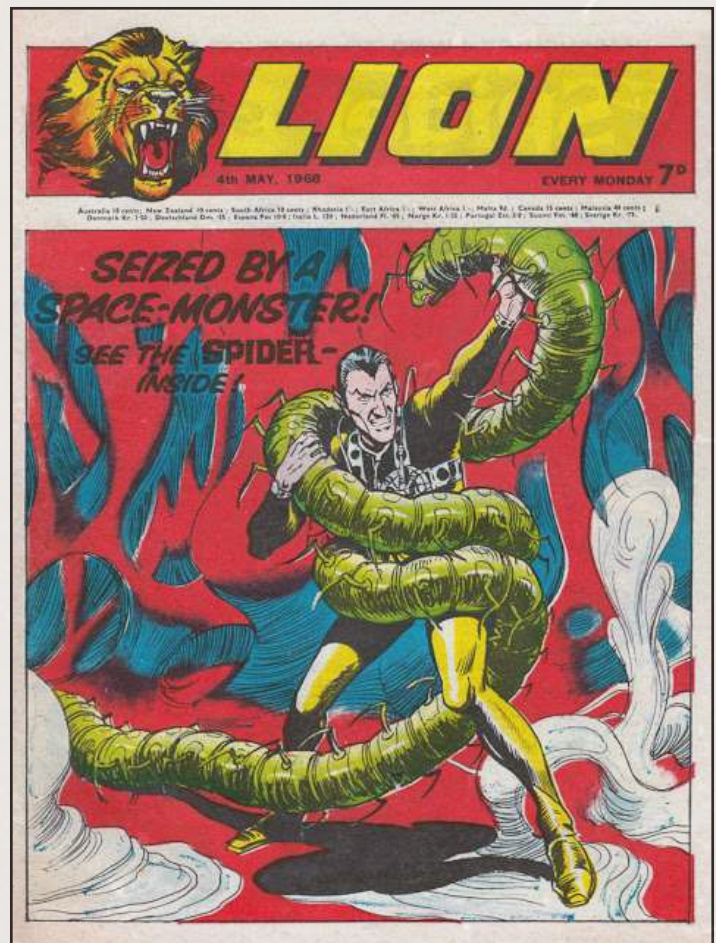
U.K. EDITION

THOMSON & SON

1960s

In the 1960s Marvel Comics revolutionised the superhero genre in America, and reprints of these comics soon found their way to Britain. By now the import ban had been lifted and British readers now had a great deal more access to American comics, primarily through the reprints produced by Alan Class, who bundled together many stories into his black and white publications which became a favourite at summer beachside resorts. Then the licence to reprint Marvel comics shifted to Odhams, whose Power range, which included *Terrific* and *Fantastic*, mixed American superhero stories with more traditional British humour strips. DC Comics characters like Superman and Batman were also reprinted, and the popularity of the Batman TV series brought even more attention to superhero comics. However, countering the lantern-jawed heroics of the American stories were characters like The Spider and the Steel Claw, who appeared in comics like *Lion* and *Valiant*, and who were anti-heroes. The Spider was a master criminal and his adventures were written by Superman co-creator Jerry Siegel. It was also a time when Spanish artists, working through agencies, were producing a lot of artwork for the British market, which changed the look and tone of some British comics considerably.

This section contains a story drawn by Phillip Vaughan that imagines that the character of Alpha has become popular enough to get his own American comic! This is an inversion of the real situation at the time, when reprints of American comics were starting to dominate British newsstands. There is also a page which imagines how pages from this story might be recut and changed to fit into a British reprint format. This was common in British comics, and sometimes the changes had a quite detrimental effect on the flow of the story and page composition, especially when spot illustrations were thrown in to fill up empty spaces. There is also a letters page that is reminiscent of Marvel letter's pages and the banter encouraged by editors like Stan Lee. However, having a character reply to letters was also something of a British tradition. Finally, there is a cover by artist Hannah Rose that imagines a Spanish reprint of Alpha (or Alfa), reflecting how such reprints often took great liberties with the material.



TALES OF
THE UNIVERSE!

UNIVERSE™ ALL-COLOUR COMICS



10c

1
AUG



©1966 Universe Comics. All Rights Reserved.

ALPHA™



ALPHA
APPEARS
IN THE
UNITED
STATES
FOR THE
FIRST
TIME!

-RV-

ALPHA

WORDS ESCAPE ME

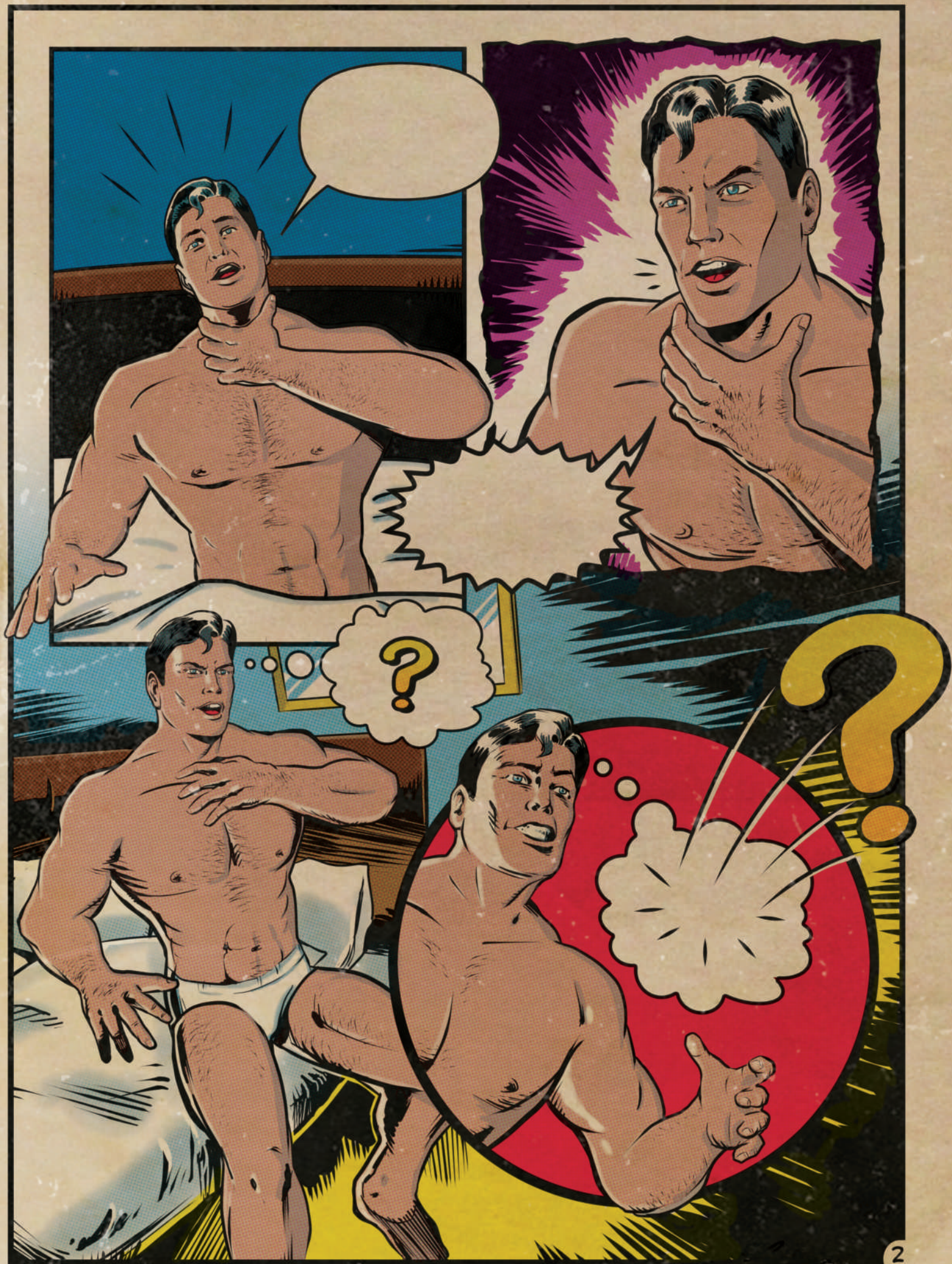


CHRIS MURRAY PHILLIP VAUGHAN
WRITER ARTIST

NOTCOMI C. SANS
LETTERER

NAT FULLERTON
CREATOR

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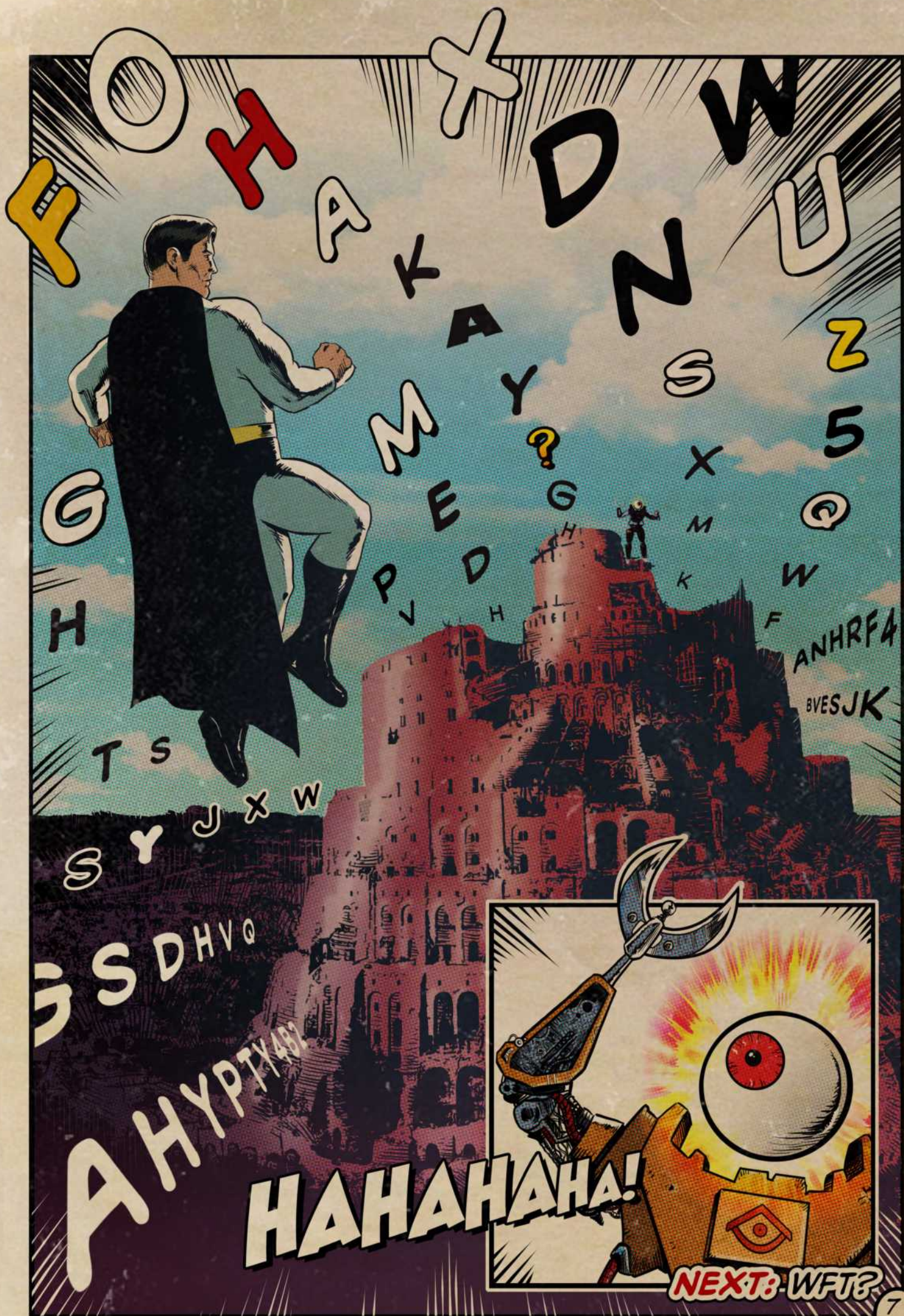












ALPHA MAIL

Send your mail to Alpha HQ, Reform Street, Dundee DD1 4HT.



Greetings Alphans! Now that we are on the seventh issue of Alpha the letters have been pouring into the UniVerse Studios in New York! Just last week the editor took a large sack of mail to Alpha's secret hideout and the super-powered titan has taken the time to provide some answers to your burning questions, so keep those letters coming.

STAR LETTER

Dear Alpha,

Your comic is great, but there is one thing I don't get. Are you American or English? My father tells me that you are from Scotland in England, but in your comic you seem to live in New York. My father has an old English comic where Alpha speaks funny, and my brother says he is speaking Scotch. Can you clear this up?

Brian Hoyle, Chicago

Alpha says: Hello Brian! That is a good question. As you will know my comic started in Britain, published in Scotland, but I am from the stars and imagination, so the whole planet Earth is my home! And as for speaking funny... well, I wear many guises in my fight against crime! Keep reading!

Dear UniVerse,

I was stationed in Britain before D-Day and read Alpha comics back when they were in Trump. There were lots of American comics in the UK at the time, some brought over by us Yanks as ballast in ships, and the Brit kids loved them almost as much as our chocolate. But when I returned home after the war I wasn't able to find Alpha comics anymore. Imagine my

delight when I saw the American Alpha on the newsstand! Keep up the great work.

Gary Hunter, New Orleans

Alpha says: Thank you for your service Gary! I needed all the help I could get during the war. We sure couldn't have done it without our Yank buddies!

Dear Alpha,

I want more Alpha Girl and Trixie. There are too many boys in your comics. I want to see more girls fighting the bad guys.

Jen Barnes (age 9), Exeter

Alpha says: You are in for a treat Jen! Next issue Alpha Girl returns, and she has a new friend, Strawberry, her beloved crime fighting pony!

Dear UniVerse,

I have a lot of British comics in my, frankly huge, collection. You are copying them. Stop it.

Peter Hansen, Canada

Alpha says: Our lawyers have asked you to stop sending us letters.

Dear Alpha creators,

So, the original Doctor Oculus was a magician and devil worshipper, and his head was cut off by a creature from another dimension that looks like an eyeball and possesses a robot body that is powered by the head of the original Doctor Oculus? What are you guys on? Seriously... I need to get some of that gear.

Grant (name withheld for legal reasons), Glasgow

Dear UniVerse,

I am an academic in the emerging

field of comics studies. I would like to conduct extensive interviews with your staff to determine whether these comics constitute an astute parody of the workings of politics through popular media, or if this is all just an elitist prank perpetuated by immature men who should stop slapping their own backs in sickening self-congratulation at their accumulation of knowledge about the funny books.

Dr Julia Round, Bournemouth

The Editor: Well, it's a bit of both.



JOIN ALPHA IN HIS FIGHT AGAINST THE EVIL DOCTOR OCULUS:

BECOME A MEMBER OF THE ALPHA FAN CLUB TODAY!

Membership is only \$5 per year, and on joining you will receive an Alpha badge, a membership card, and exclusive copies of the UniVerse books *How to Draw Alpha*, and *So you want to Make Comics the UniVerse Way?* (not available in shops).

Become an Alphan today!

✂

To join the ALPHA FAN CLUB simply send this coupon along with a postal order for \$5.00 to Alpha HQ, Reform Street, Dundee DD1 4HT.

NAME: _____
ADDRESS: _____

POSTCODE: _____

☐ Yes! My soul belongs to the great Doctor Oculus. Hail the Doc!

The Alpha stories that were created and published in America by UniVerse Comics in the mid 1960's were later reprinted in Britain, but as was common at the time, the pages were recut for the British format.





ALFA

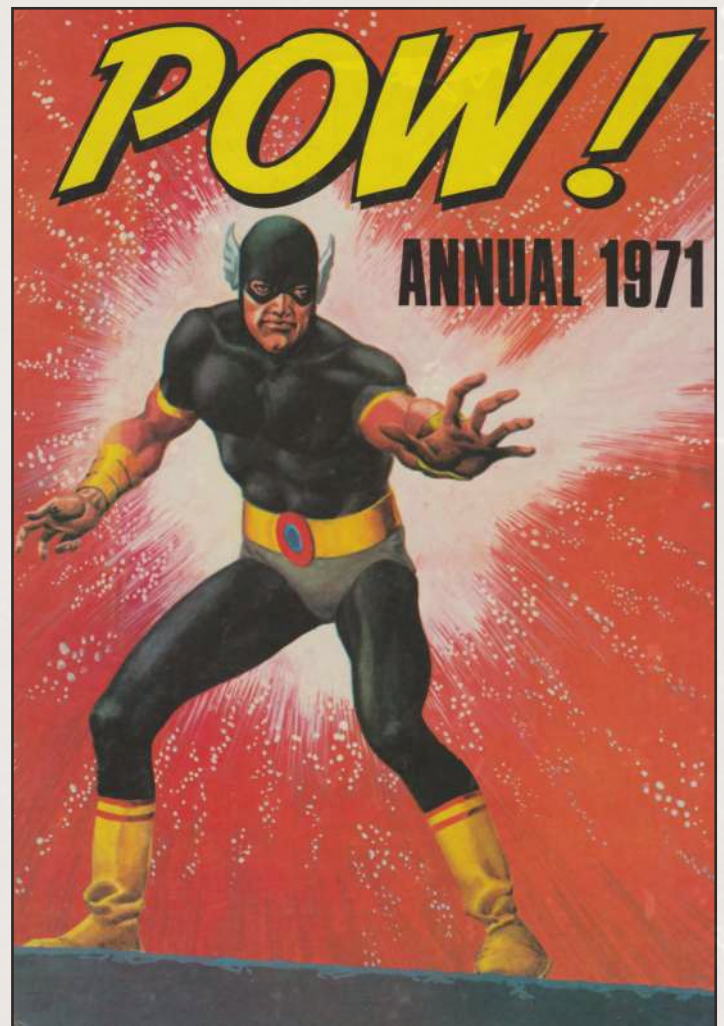


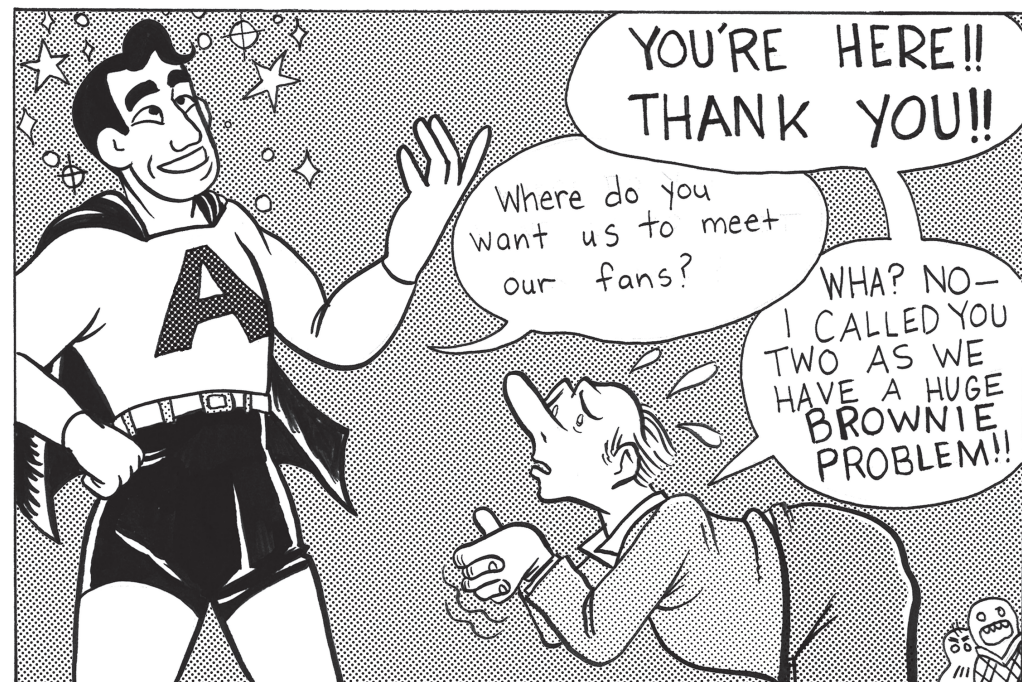
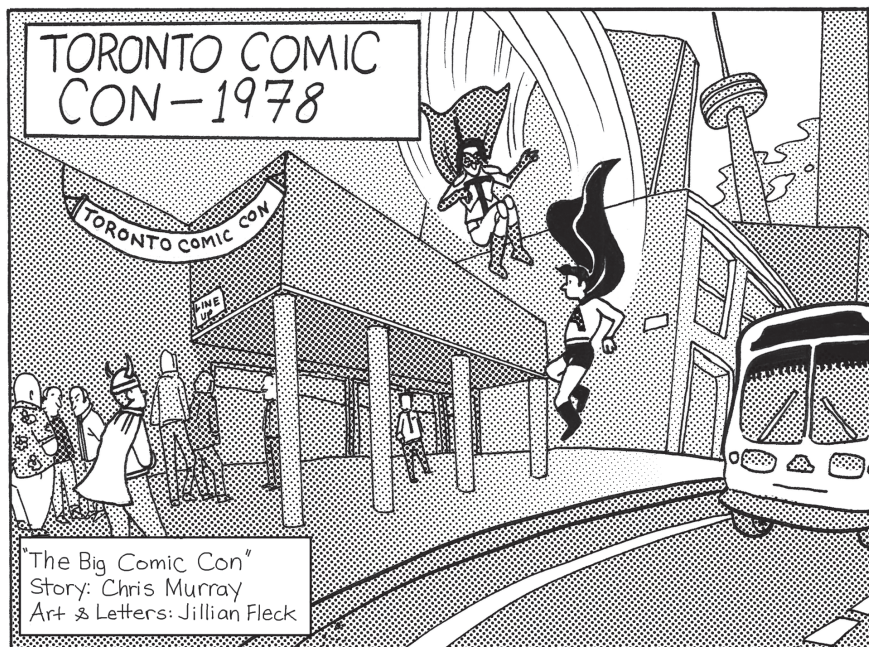
¡Y LA TENTADORA DE TEQUILA!

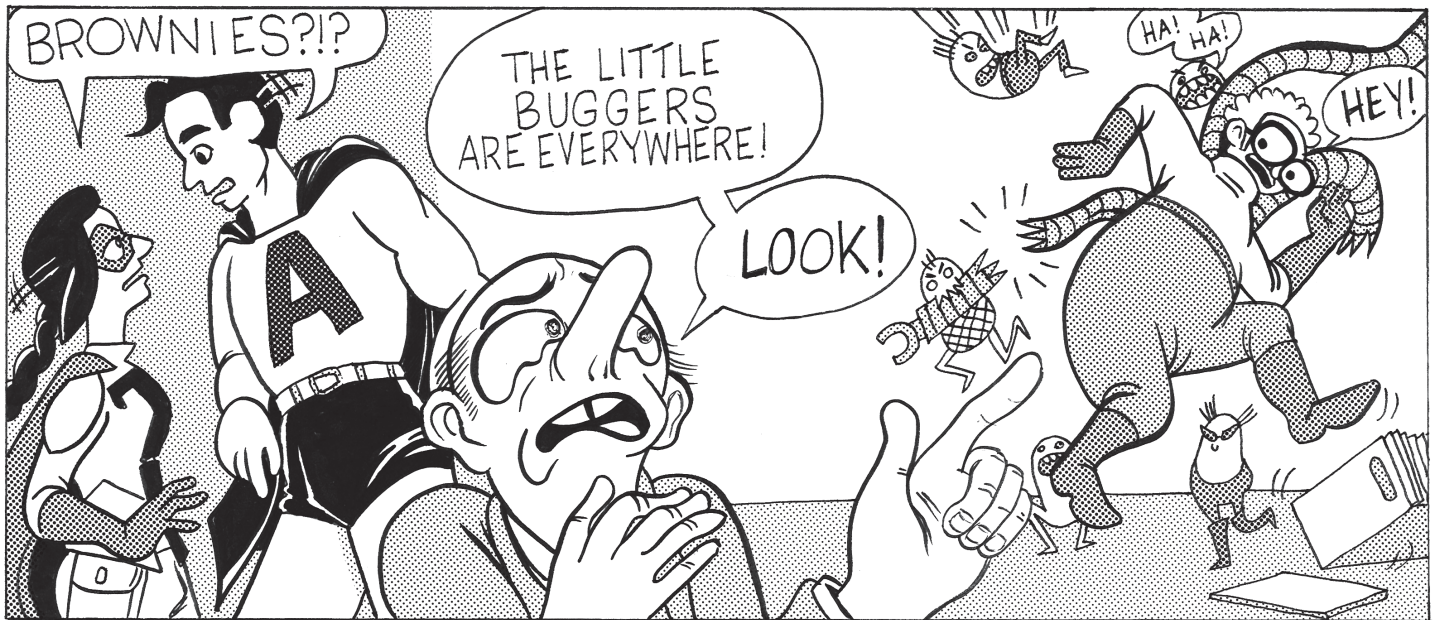
1970s

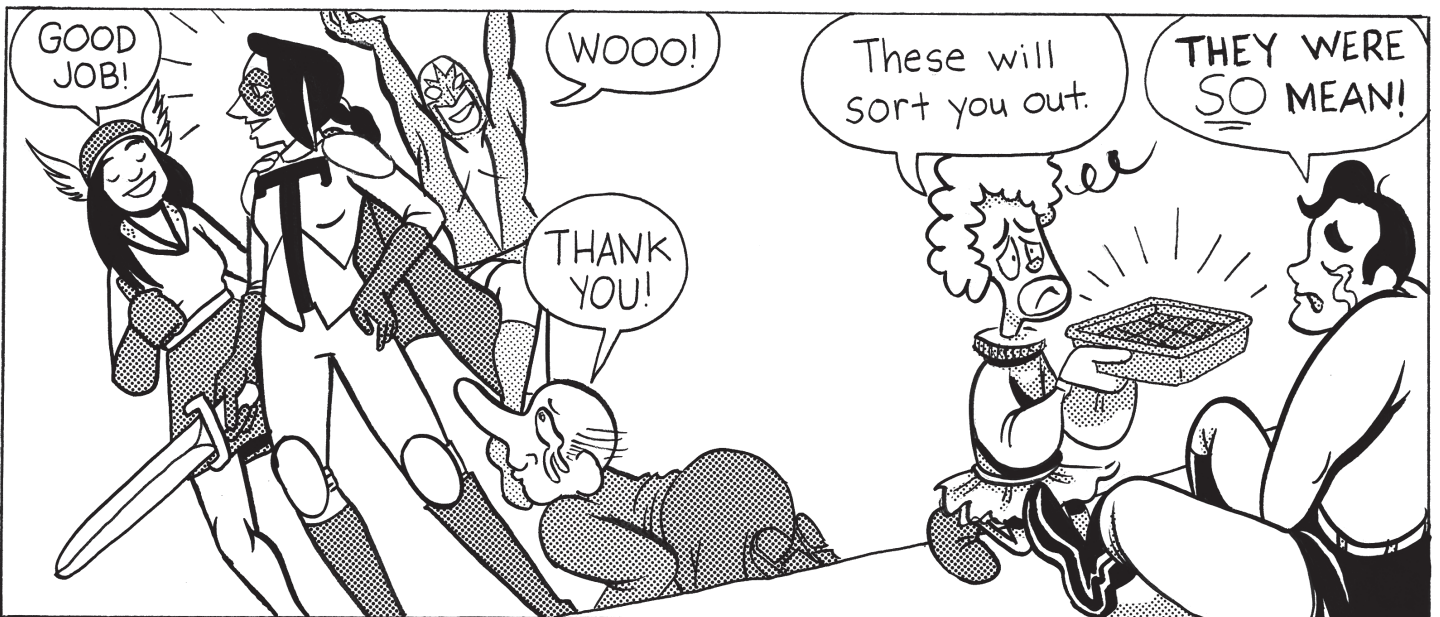
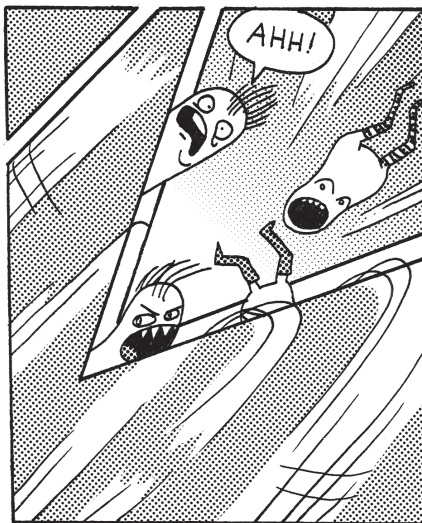
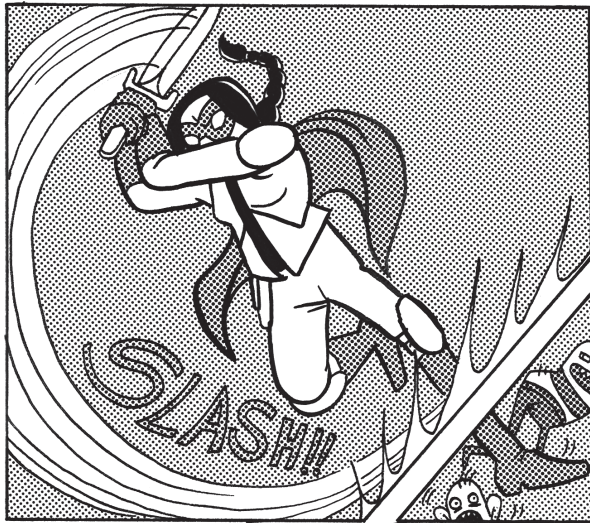
The 1970s saw a rapidly changing marketplace in Britain. Several longstanding titles were gone, and sales were down, partly due to the widespread availability of television in the previous decade and the rise of computer games. Genres like science fiction and horror made a resurgence, and an older readership was emerging. By this point Odhams had lost the Marvel licence and folded, and Marvel took the highly unusual step of setting up a division in Britain. Marvel UK reprinted American material in comics like *Mighty World of Marvel*, and many others, and also produced original material, including stories featuring Captain Britain. The 1971 *Pow!* annual saw a number of new superheroes appear, but they never re-appeared outside of this fascinating publication, which was produced by Spanish artists. Fan communities were organising too, and comics conventions and the small press and underground scenes were organised around this. The greater diversity in comics production shaped by these changes led to the development of autobiographical comics, and other genres.

This section has a story drawn by Canadian comics artist Jillian Fleck which takes Alpha and his companion Trixie to Canada, where he attends a comics convention. This story echoes the small press style, and provides a humorous version of Alpha. There is also a drawing of Alpha meeting The Big E by comics legend Dave Gibbons, and coloured by Phillip Vaughan. In the 1970s Gibbons played the part of The Big E, who was the fictional editor of the comic *Tornado*. Finally, reflecting the trend for autobiographical comics in the 1970s, comics artist and scholar Damon Herd, who specialises in autobiographical comics, has produced a one page comic, 'The Nat Fullerton Name Story' echoing Harvey Pekar and Robert Crumb's story, 'The Harvey Pekar Name Story'.







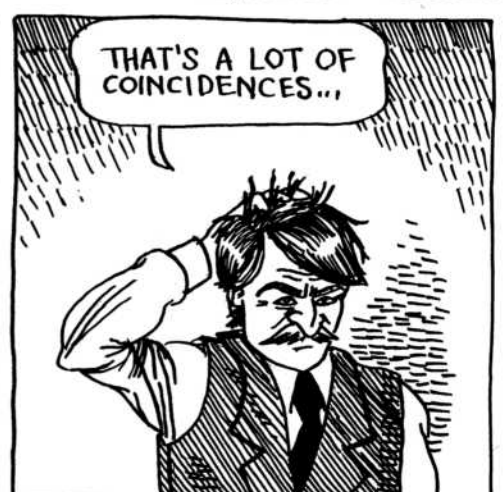
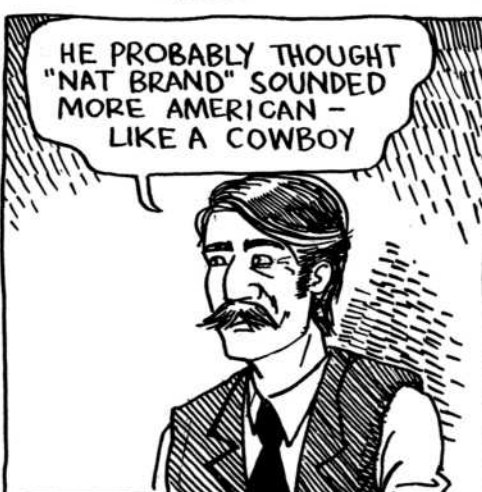
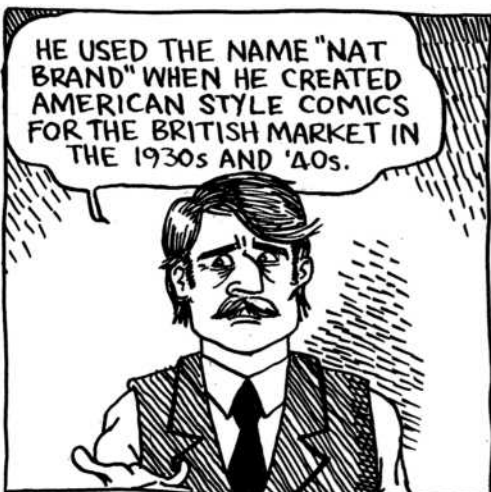
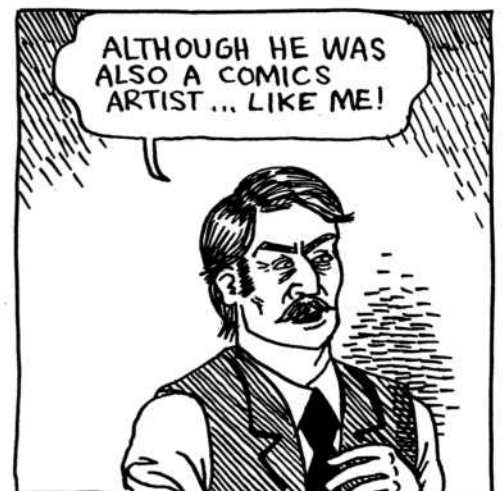
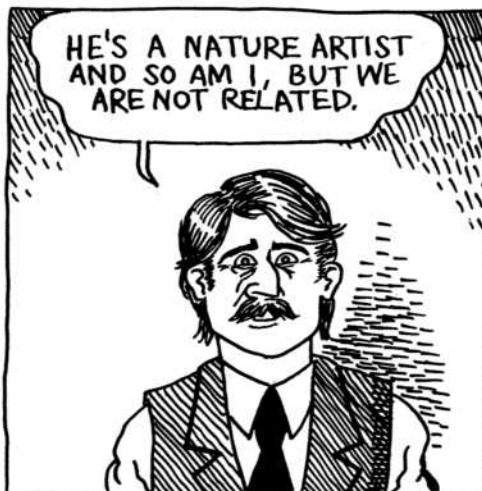
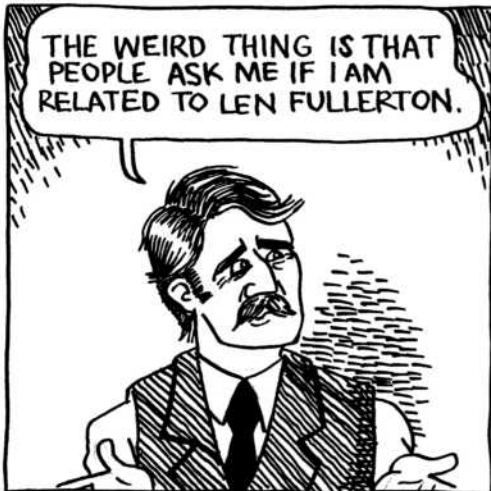
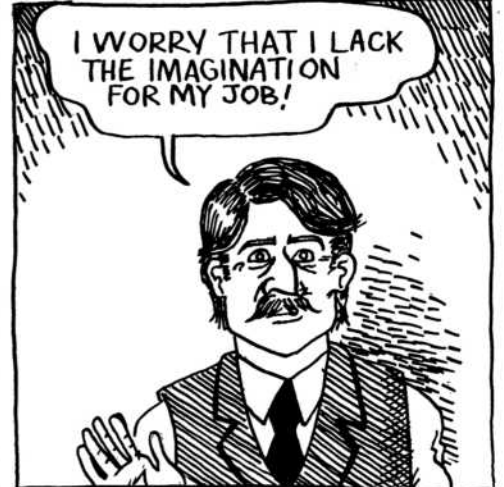
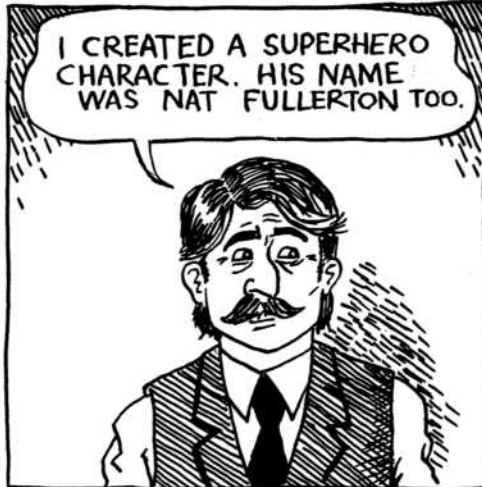




DAVE GIBBONS
2016 -RV-

THE NAT FULLERTON NAME STORY

NAT FULLERTON 1974

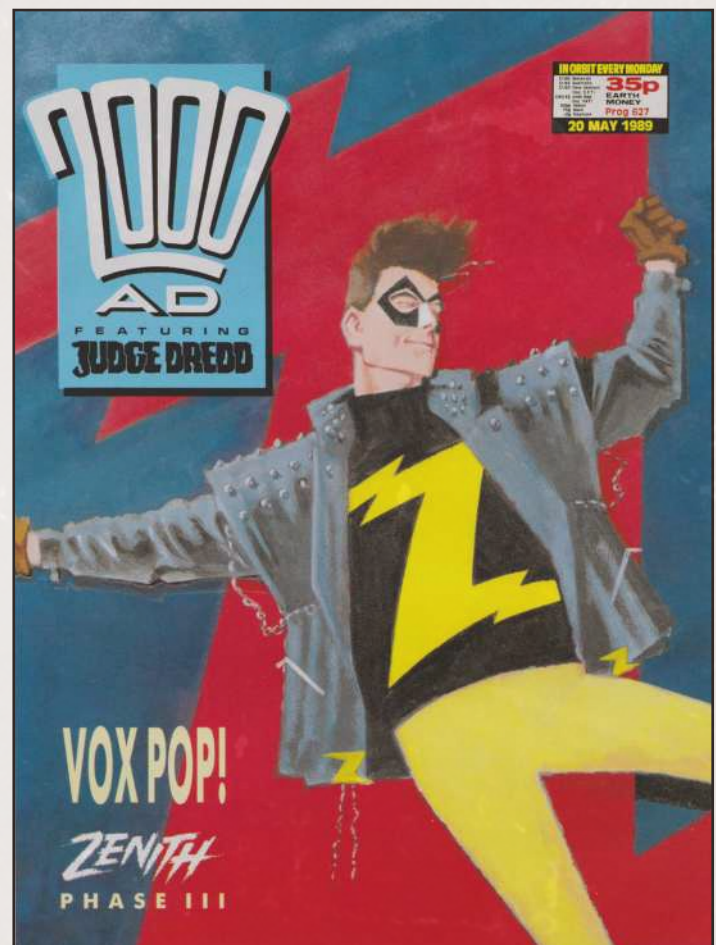


1980s

The 1980s was a strange time for British comics. On the one hand sales were down, but there was a new generation of British comics creators who were emerging that would form the so-called 'British Invasion' of American comics. These included superstar writers Alan Moore, Grant Morrison, Jamie Delano, and Neil Gaiman, and artists such as Dave Gibbons, Kevin O'Neill, and Alan Davis. A revisionist approach to the superhero was key to this, and the most famous example of was Moore and Gibbons' *Watchmen*. Other notable examples were *Captain Britain* and *Marvelman* by Moore, and *Zenith*, by Morrison and Steve Yeowell, which brought back many British superheroes, and *Marshal Law*, by Pat Mills and Kevin O'Neill. British comics also continued to parody the superhero ideal, as seen in *Bananaman*, which was a typical British reaction against the 'grim and gritty' American superhero comics of the time, especially those by Frank Miller. The American and British comics industries were intertwined like never before, with British creators gaining prominence, bringing a new satirical approach to the genre.



This section contains a story drawn by Elliot Balson which echoes the revisionist comics of the early to mid-1980s, such as *Marvelman* and *Zenith*. There is a cover by Norrie Millar which reflects the darker tone of a lot of the comics appearing at this time. This is countered by a toy advert, created by Phillip Vaughan, which is reminiscent of the Super Powers and the Secret Wars toy ranges. While comics were appealing to the interests of an ageing readership with cynical revisionist 'adult' storylines with unprecedented levels of violence there was also a growth in the marketing of superheroes in family orientated films, cartoons and toys.



MORE SPACE COMBAT INSIDE... !

BLACK
HOLE
PRESS

#2 40p

STAR WARRIOR

**ALPHA and ROBOTRON
VS the HELLSPAWN!**

**FREE STICKER!
DOC OCULUS!**



**PLUS:
ALPHA REBORN
CONTINUES ...**



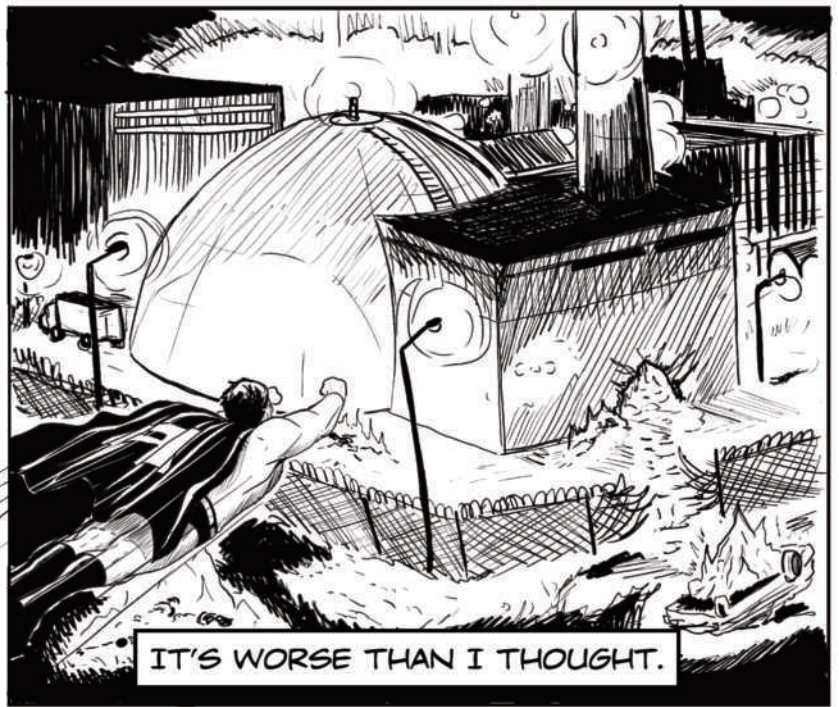
ALPHA

REBORN

STORY:
CHRIS
MURRAY

ART &
LETTERING:
ELLIOT
BALSON

...RECEIVING
REPORTS OF AN
ATTACK ON THE
UNDERHILL NUCLEAR
FACILITY. HIGH [ZZZZT]
CASUALTIES. [ZZZZT]
KIND OF MECHANICAL
CREATURE [ZZZZT]
...FEARS CONCERNING
A POSSIBLE
MELTDOWN...



IT'S WORSE THAN I THOUGHT.



MUCH WORSE.

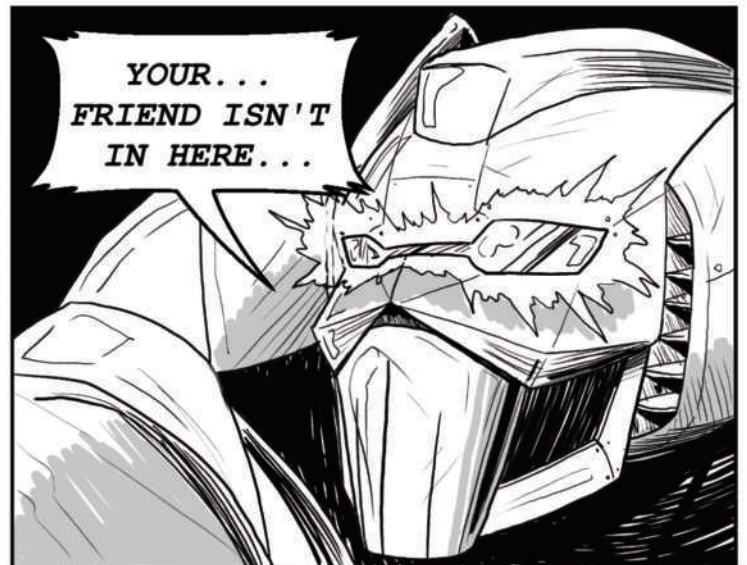
I KNOW I'M NOT GOING TO BE ABLE
TO TALK HIM DOWN THIS TIME.

I TRY
ANYWAY.

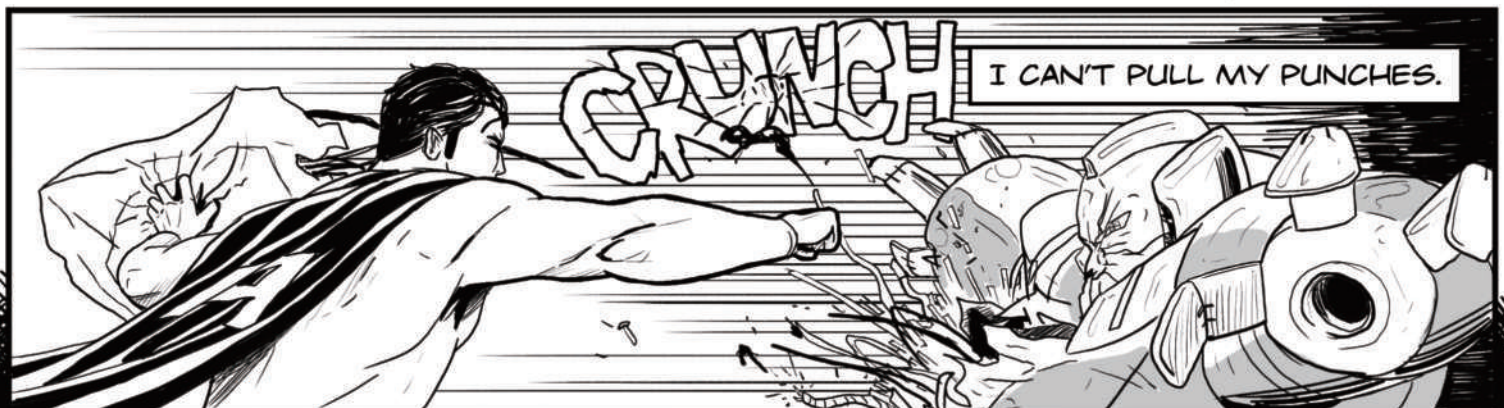
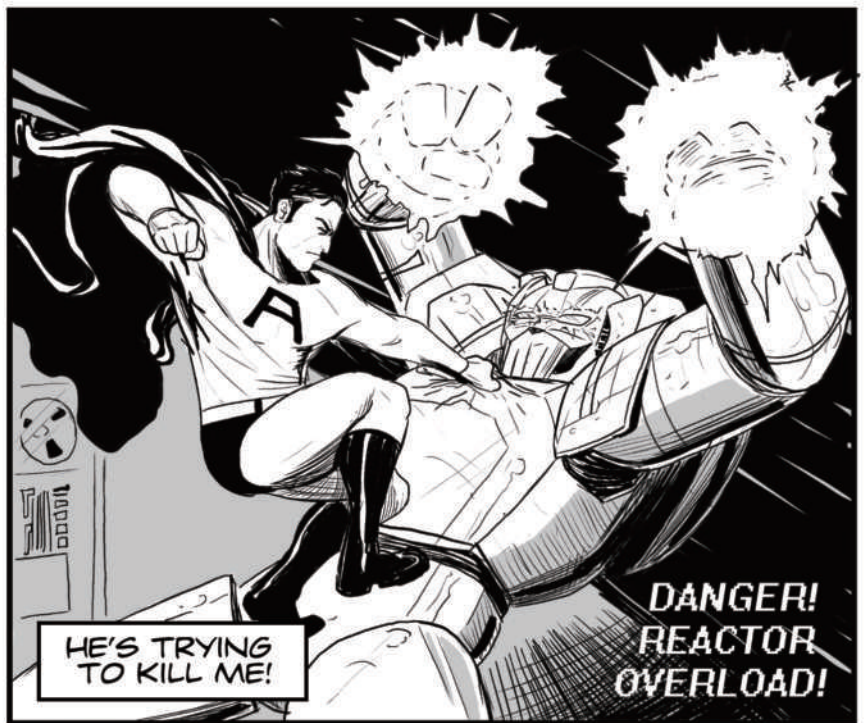


ROBOTRON!

THIS
HAS GONE
FAR ENOUGH!
PEOPLE ARE
DEAD!

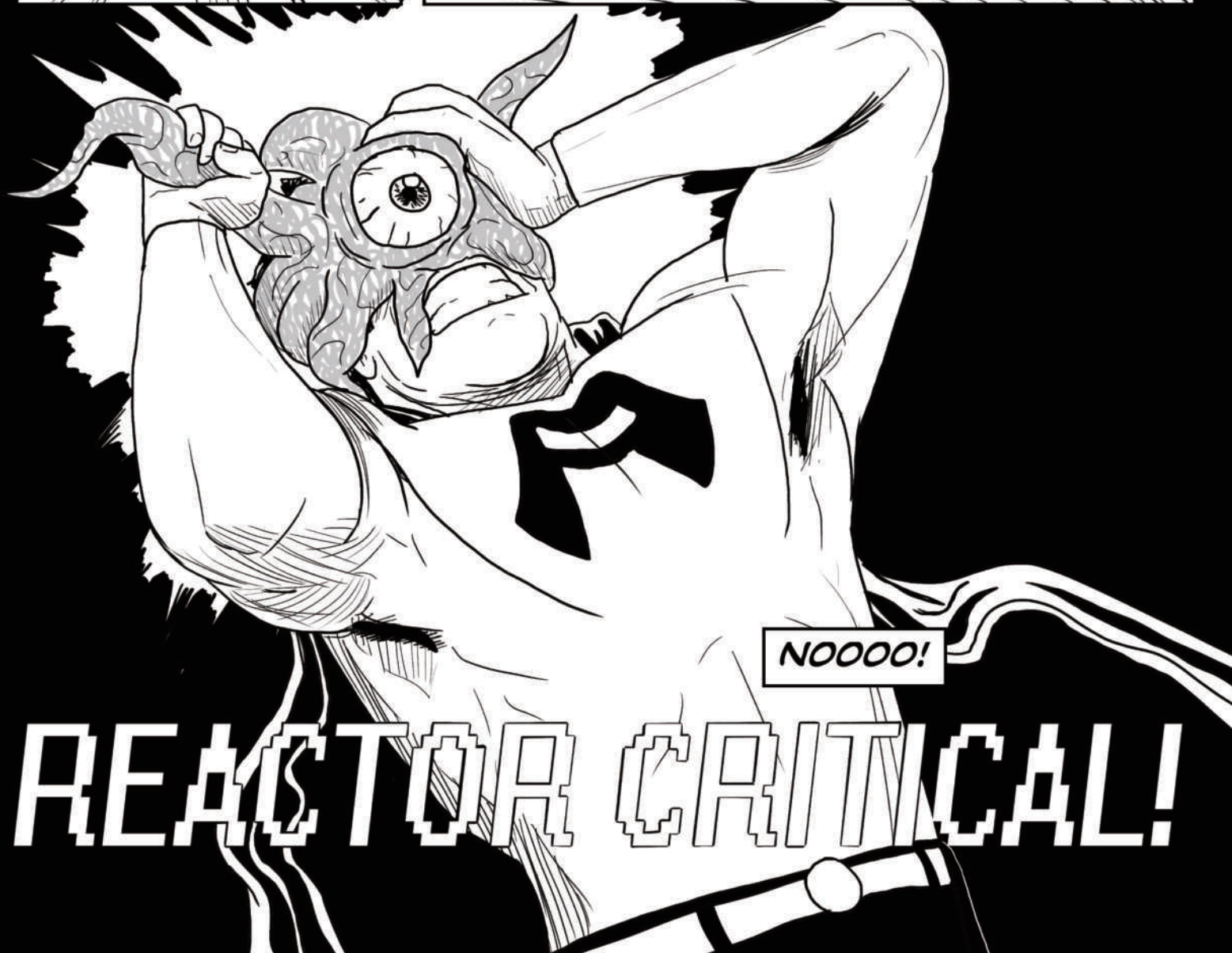
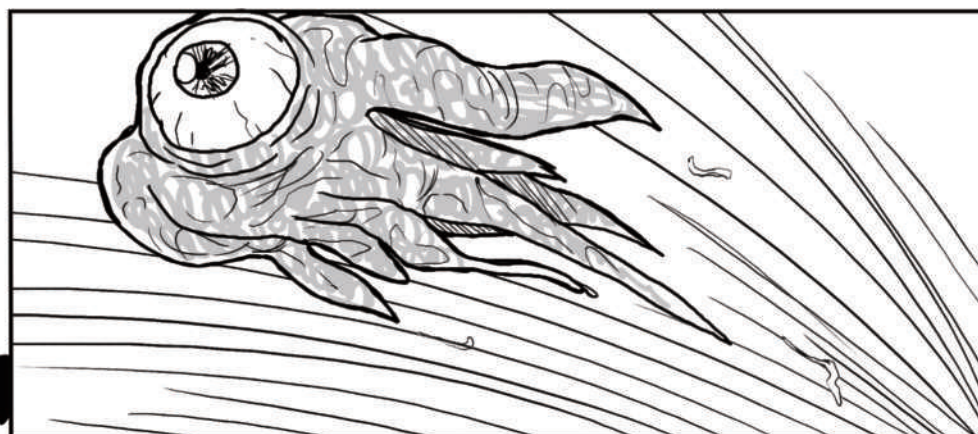
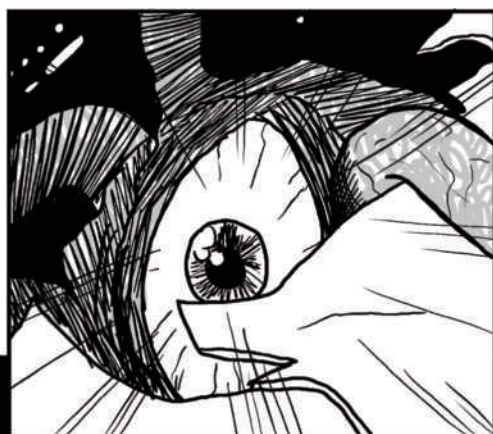
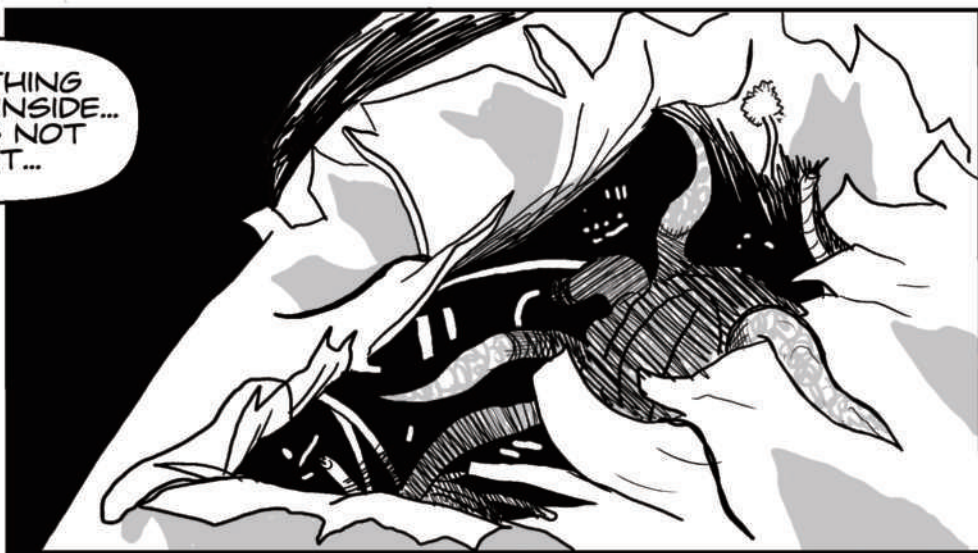


YOUR...
FRIEND ISN'T
IN HERE...



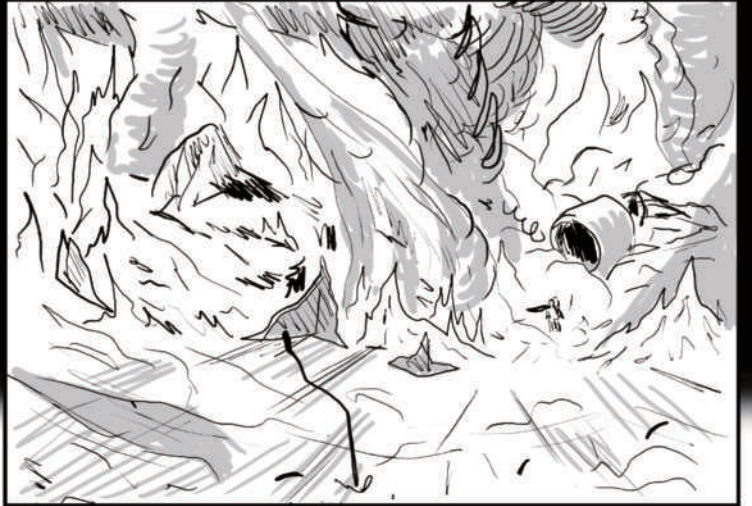
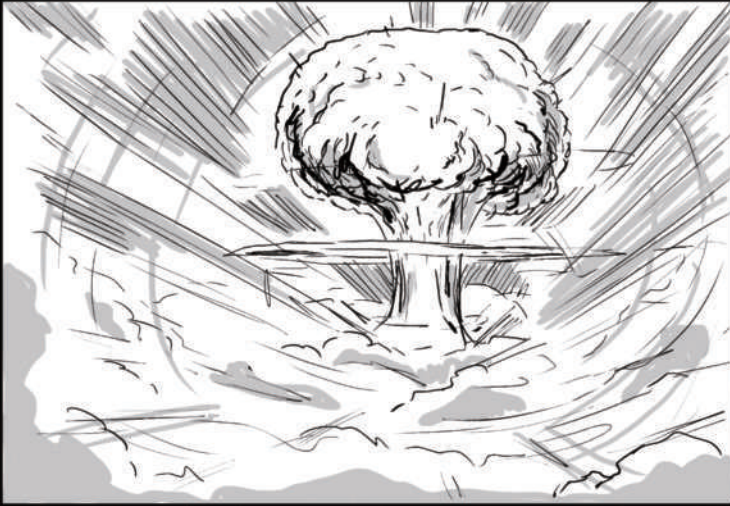
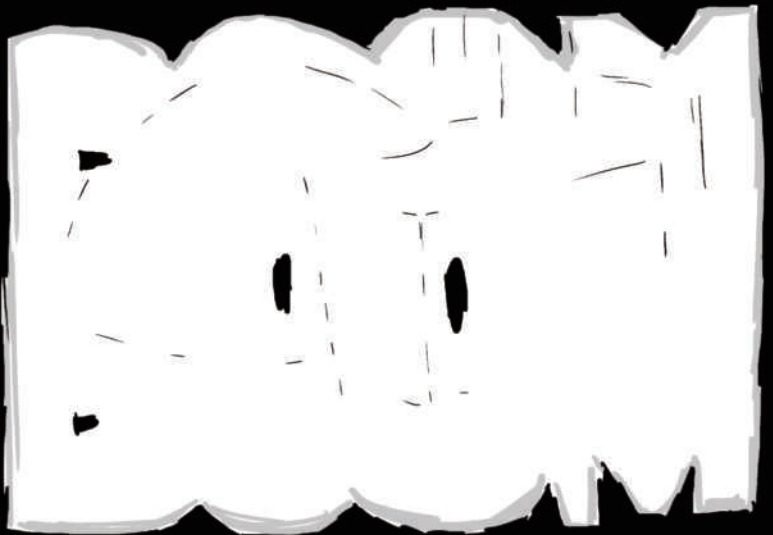
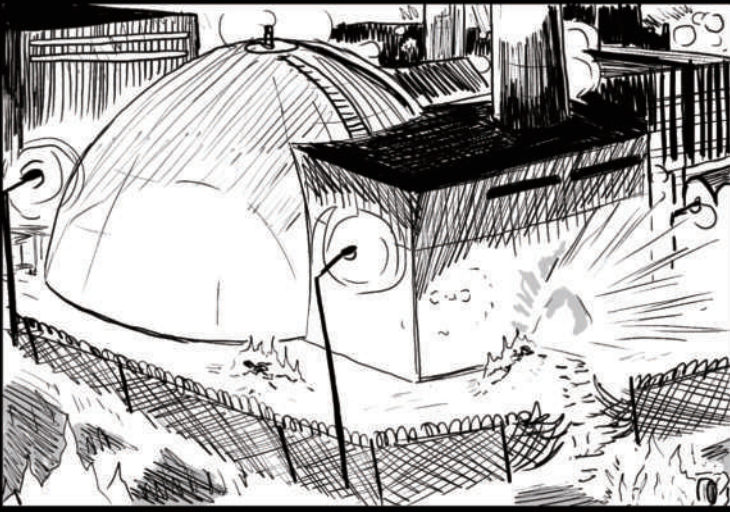


SOMETHING
MOVING INSIDE...
THAT'S NOT
RIGHT...

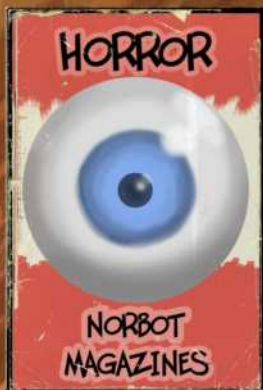


NOOOO!

REACTOR CRITICAL!



NEXT WEEK - 'I/EYE!'



DEMON MAGAZINE

25p



DOCTOR
OCULUS

VS

THE ELDER
STAR
CREATURE

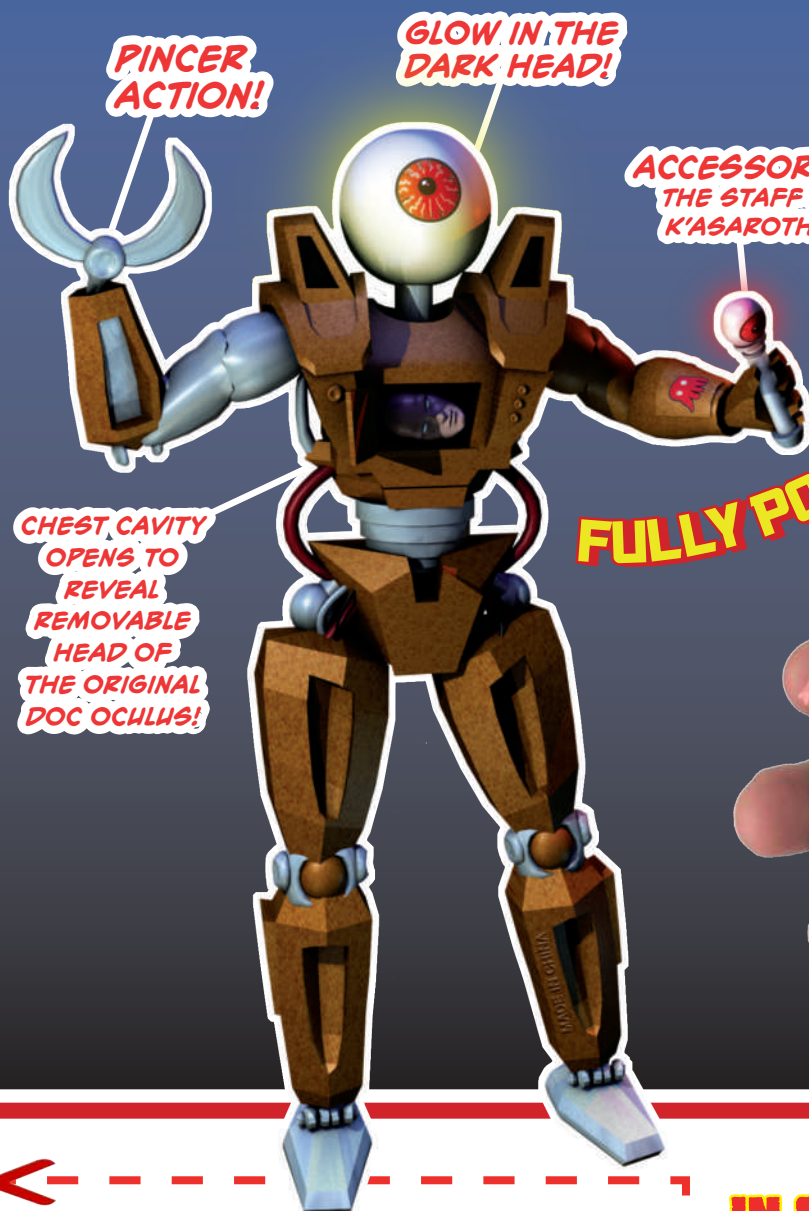
ALPHA
OF THE
ZOMBIEWORLD
STARTS THIS ISSUE!

DOCTOR OCULUS FIGURE *

* POSTAL ORDER ONLY

EXTREMELY LIMITED EDITION

ALPHA'S ARCH-NEMESIS IS THE NEW ADDITION TO PALIBRO'S TOY RANGE. FULLY POSABLE AND WITH PINCH ACTION! YOU ALL KNOW HOW THE ORIGINAL DR. OCULUS LOST HIS HEAD? THE DEMON K'ASAROTH, THE LIVING EYE CHOPPED IT OFF AND IT LIVES ON IN HIS CHEST! RELIVE THESE CLASSIC STORIES WITH THE ALPHA TOY RANGE!!!



COMING SOON:
FULLY
POSSIBLE
**ALPHA
GIRL**
FIGURE!

FULLY POSABLE!

ALSO AVAILABLE
**ALPHA
FIGURE**



DOCTOR OCULUS and ALPHA are © 1982 PaliBro Toys ®



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PB0830834

**IN SHOPS
FOR XMAS!**

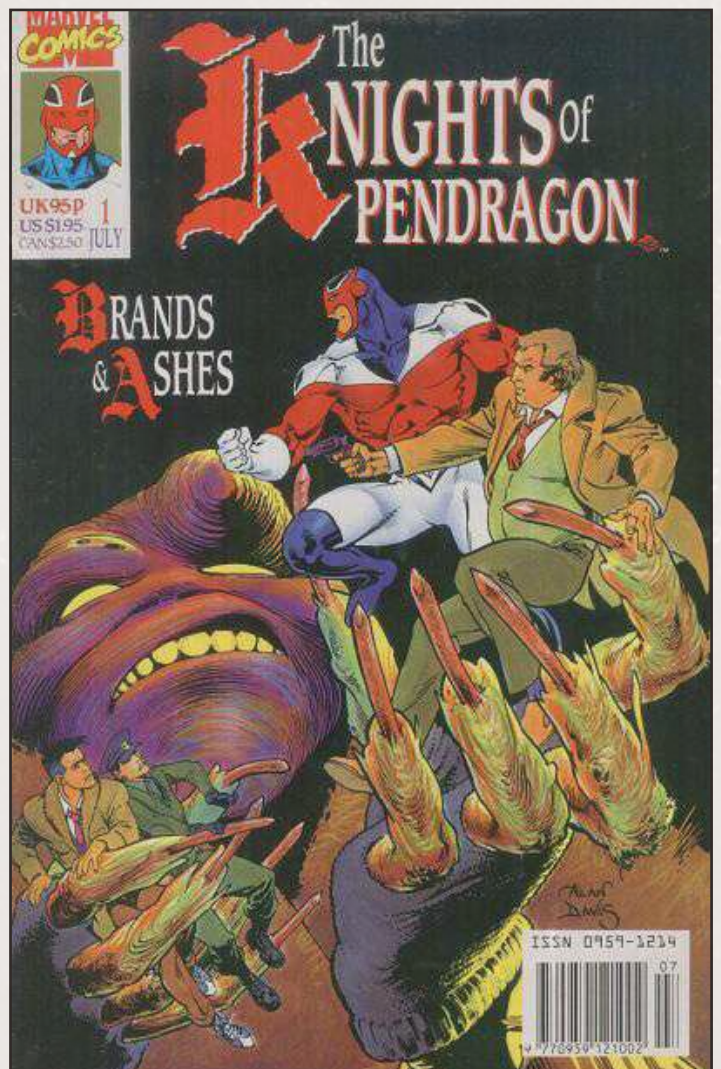
**ALPHA'S
SECRET
BASE -
THE
LAW**



1990s

In the 1990s the effects of the 'British Invasion' were still very much being felt and a second wave of British creators, headed by writers Warren Ellis, Garth Ennis and Mark Millar and artists like Frank Quitely and Steve Dillon. These two waves of British talent shaped American comics but produced a 'brain drain' effect in British comics, where the best talent was quickly siphoned off, leaving an impoverished British comics industry. The boom and bust of superheroes at the start of the decade also produced seismic shifts. When Marvel was threatened with bankruptcy one consequence was the end of Marvel UK, which had recently greatly expanded its range. This was a major blow to British comics and British superheroes, and reprints of American comics replaced original content, resetting the clock to the late 1960s and early 70s. However, there were other factors at play too, such as the huge rise in the popularity of manga and anime, which was changing the demographics of comics readers, with more girls reading comics than had been the case for a long time.

In this section the fusion of America, British and Japanese comics is seen in a story featuring Alpha Girl drawn by Rossi Gifford. This features Doc Oculus, Alpha's arch nemesis, who also appears in a poster drawn by Chris Murray and coloured by Rebecca Horner, as well as a story drawn by Letty Wilson, who gives us a glimpse into 'A Day in the Life of Doc Oculus'. Then 'The Unmentionables', drawn by Elliot Balson, shows Alpha joining a team of superheroes dedicated to clearing up the mess left by superheroes and villains through their role as a trade union of superheroes, reflecting the political critiques seen in the work of both first and second waves of the British Invasion. The influence of Jim Lee's *X-Men* is in evidence here, as it was in many British comics at the time, from Marvel UK's *Overkill*, to independent comics such as *Brit Force*.





ALPHA GIRL

VS.

DR. OCULUS

AND HIS AMAZING
MULVEY SCOPE



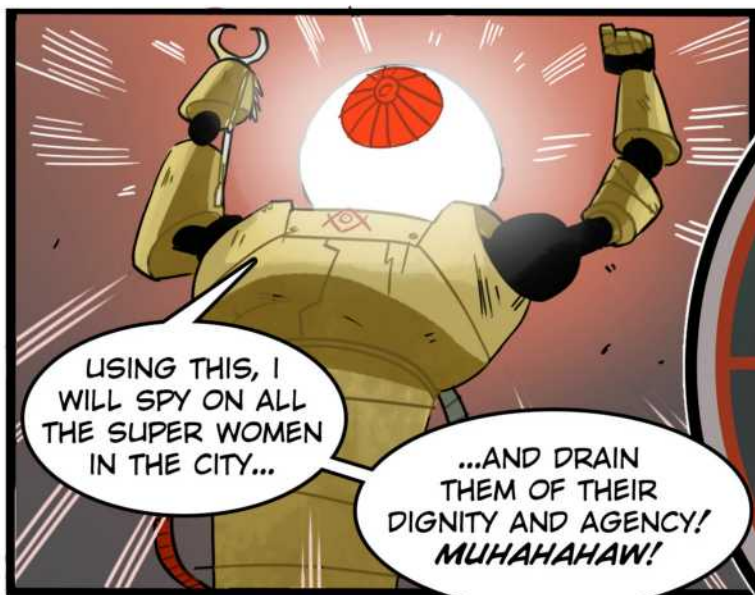
WRITTEN
BY
CHRIS
"ONE MORE PAGE"
MURRAY

ART
BY
"GIGGLING"
ROSSI
GIFFORD

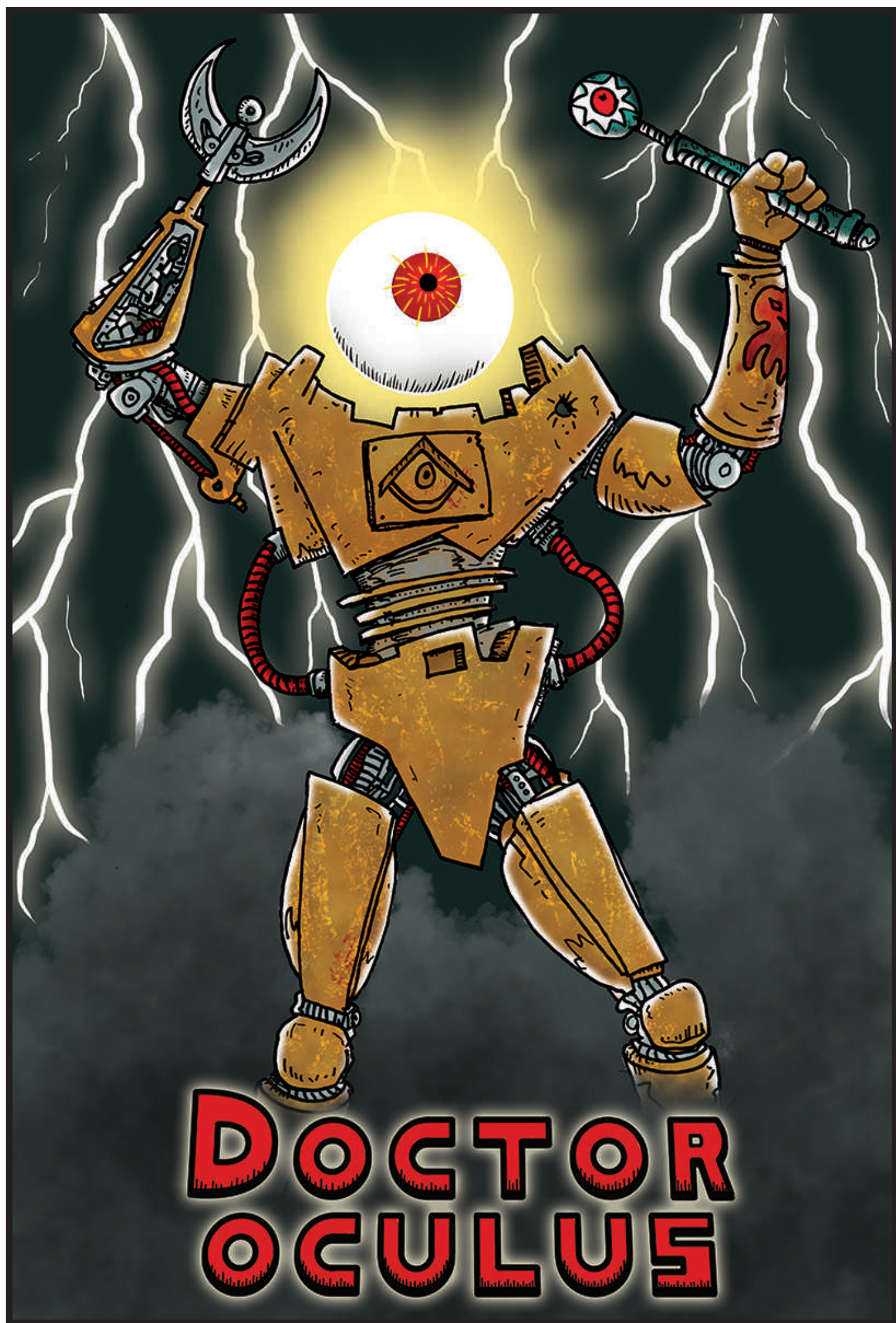
LETTERING
BY
NORRIE
"THE MACHINE"
MILLAR

DEAR DIARY, WAS ON NIGHT
PATROL AGAIN TONIGHT, LOOKING
TO SEE WHAT *TROUBLE* I COULD
GET MYSELF INTAE...









A DAY IN THE LIFE OF DOC OCVLUS

STORY BY
CHRIS MURRAY

ART BY
LETTY WILSON

WHAT A MORNING!
ANOTHER DEATH RAY
MALFUNCTION...

AND
SCRATCH ANOTHER
ROBO-BUTLER...
THOSE THINGS ARE
NOT EASY TO
COME BY.

AND NOW
I HAVE TO DO
MY OWN FRIGGING
WASHING UP!

GRUMBLE
GRUMBLE...

CRACK

HMMMM...

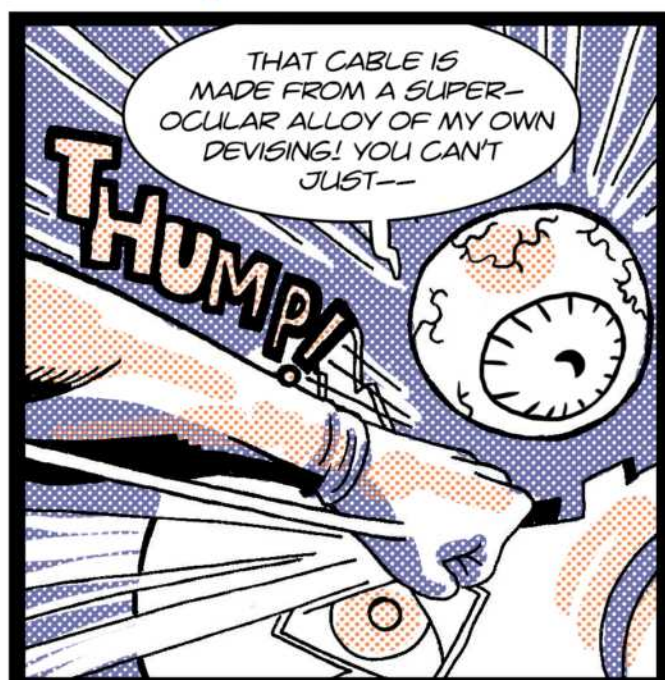
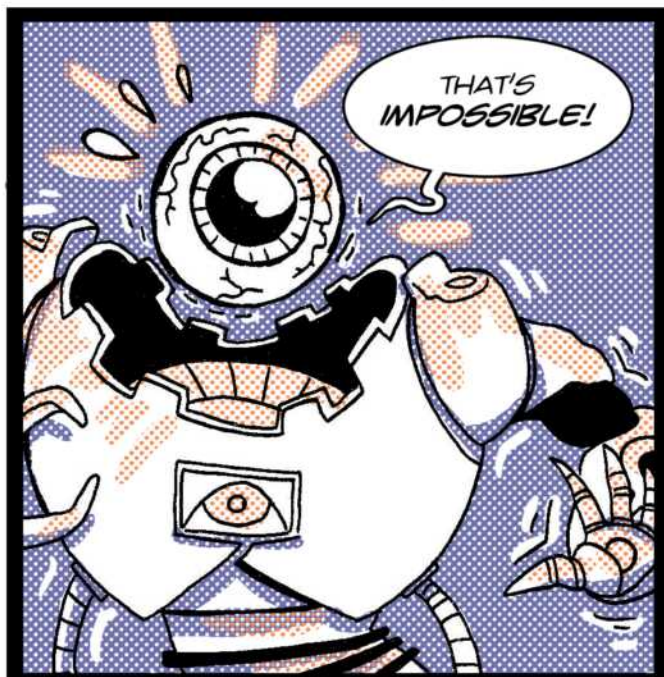
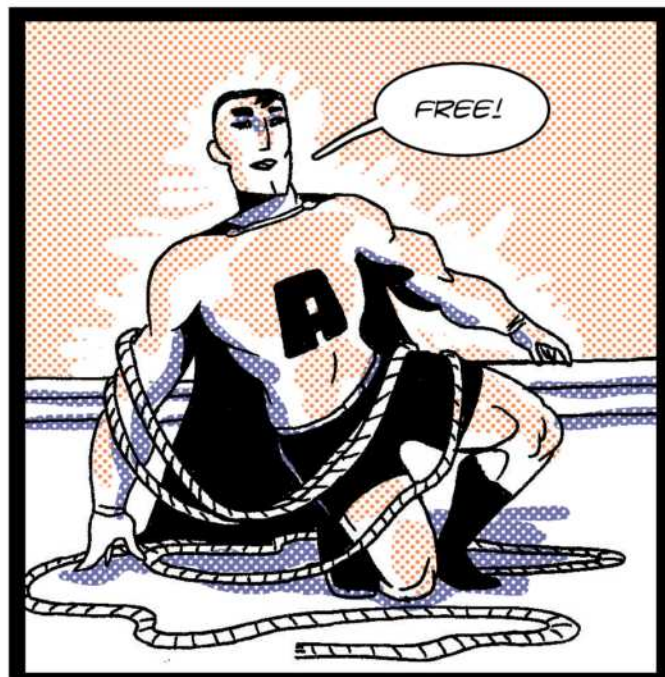
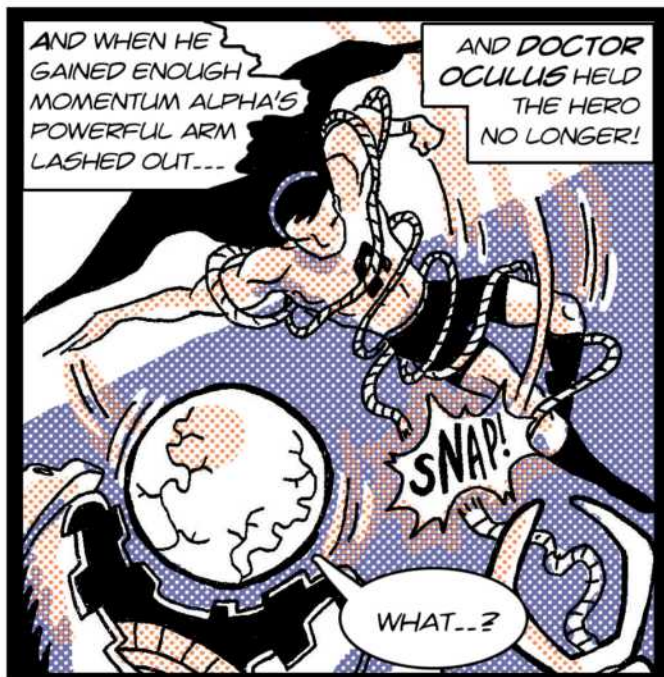
**SUPERVILLAIN
Lifestyles**
ARE YOU
GRIMDARK
ENOUGH?
SHE KILLS
WITH A
VILE O-WAY
SHOCK
NEWS!
BADGER OF
DOOM CONSIDER
TURNING TO
ROBBER
BUTLER
CALE

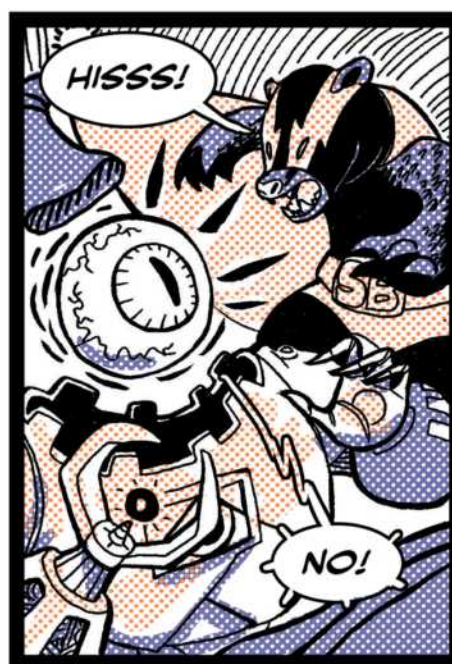
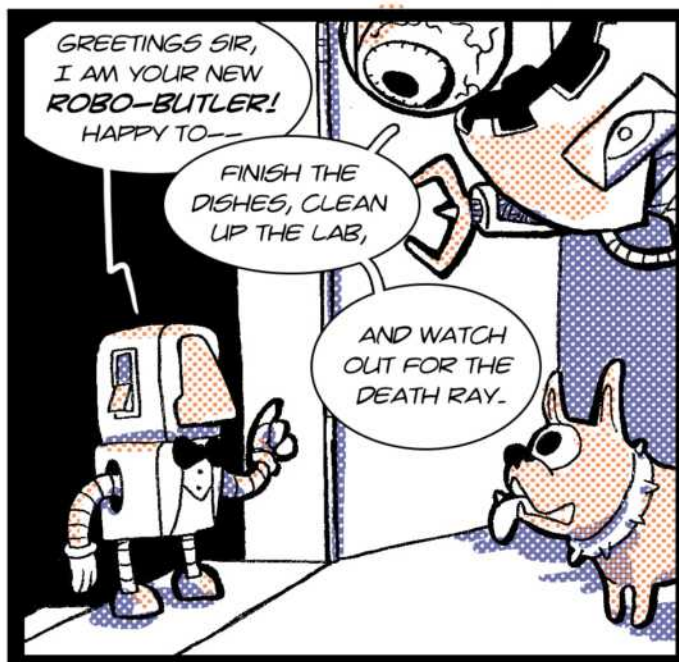
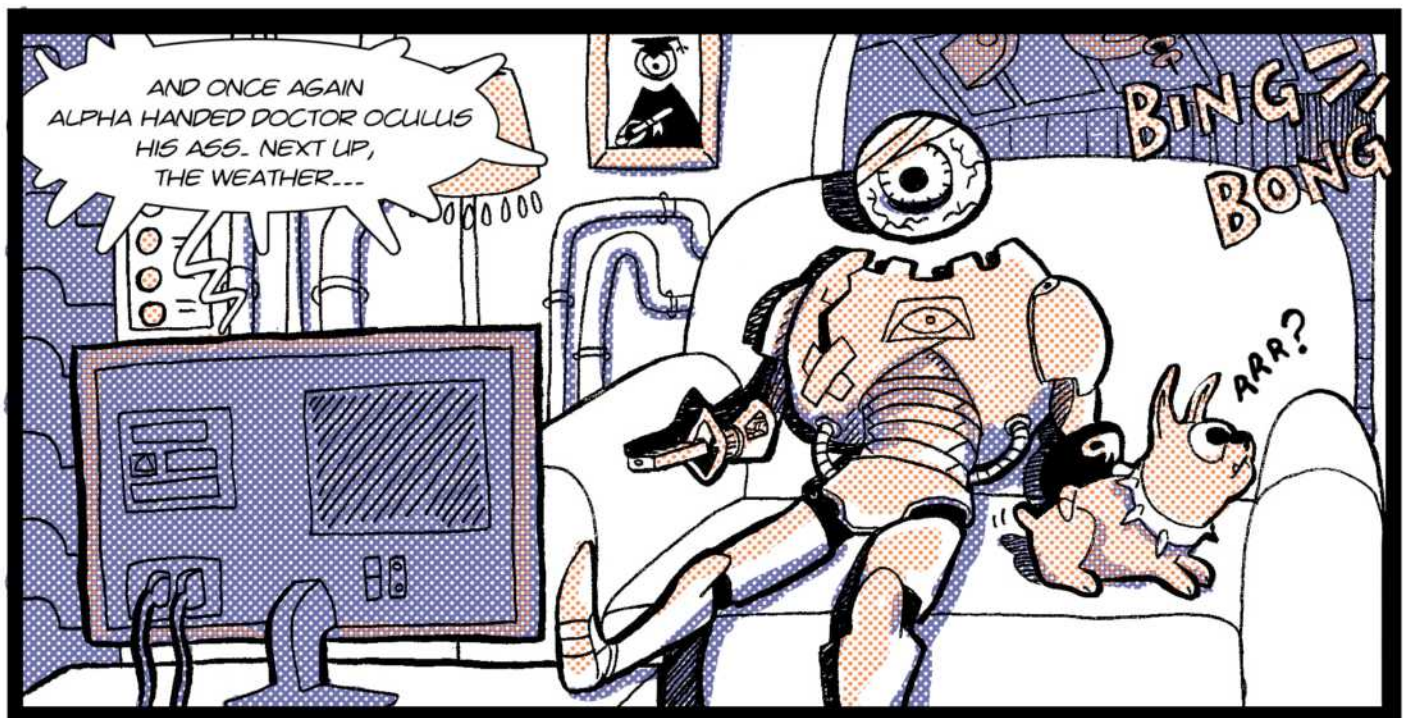
PACKAGE FOR
THE BADGER OF
DOOM...

DOES HE
STILL LIVE
HERE?!

QUESTION... IF YOUR
FORMER PARTNER IN CRIME
LEAVES YOUR JOINTLY
MORTGAGED SECRET
HIDEOUT TO BECOME
A SUPERHERO,

AND THEN DOESN'T PAY
THE PHONE BILL AND
IGNORES YOUR CALLS,
IT'S COOL TO STEAL THE
SUPER-ALLOY CABLE
HE INVENTED IN ORDER TO
KIDNAP YOUR ARCH NEMESIS... RIGHT?





UniVerse



#1 80P

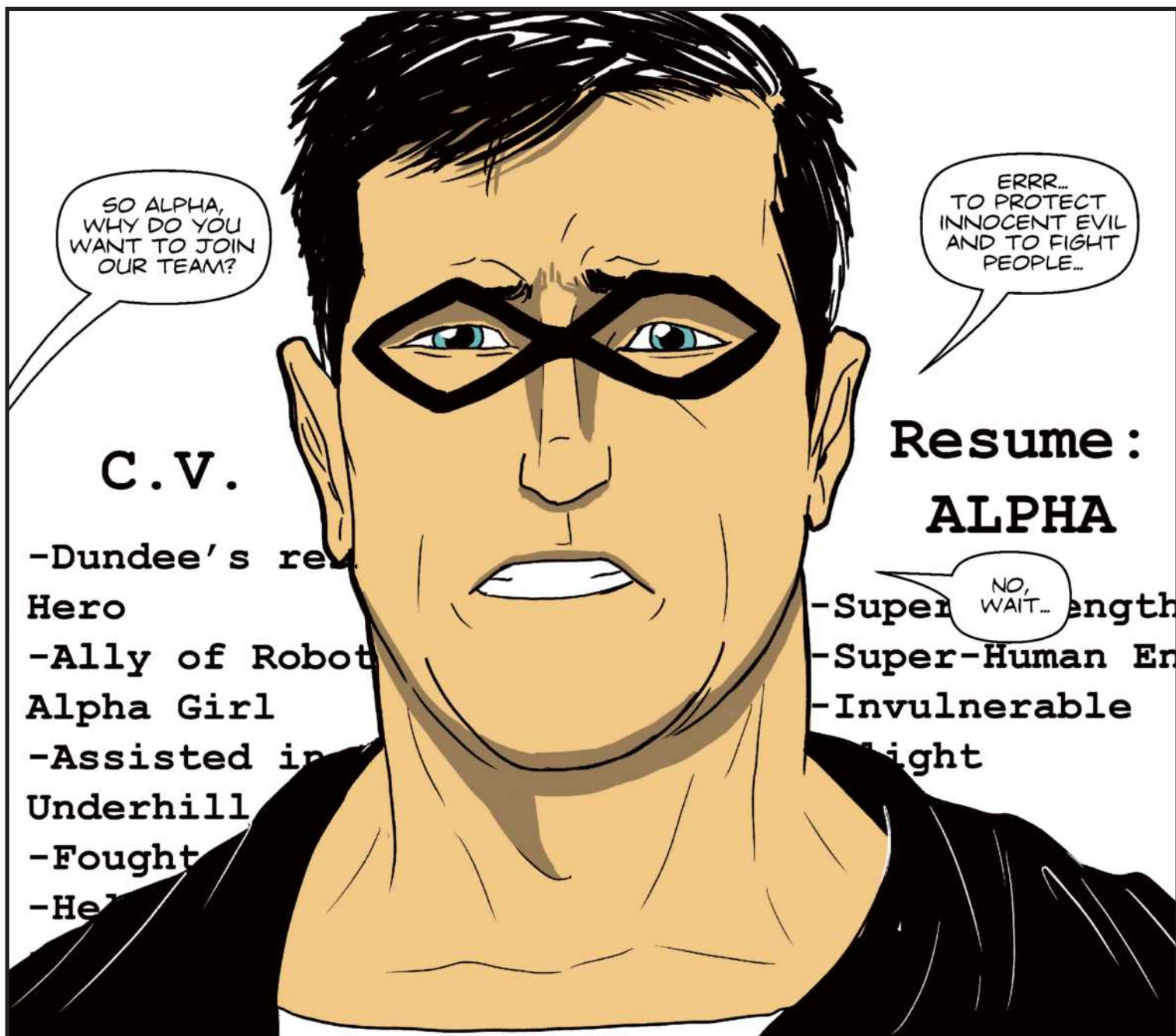
UN

THE
UNMENTIONABLES

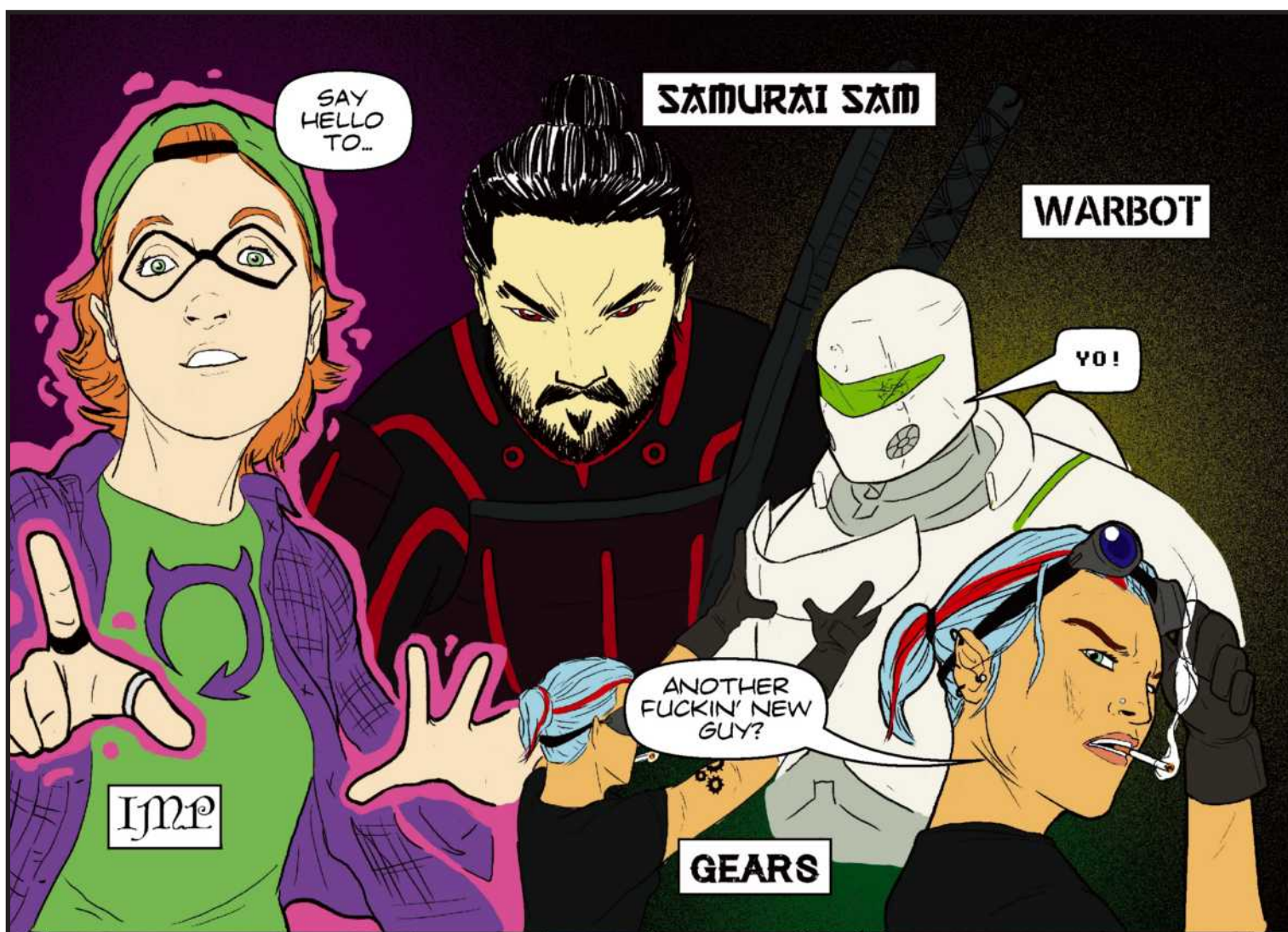
FEATURING
ALPHA



HAVE YOU PAID
YOUR DUES?







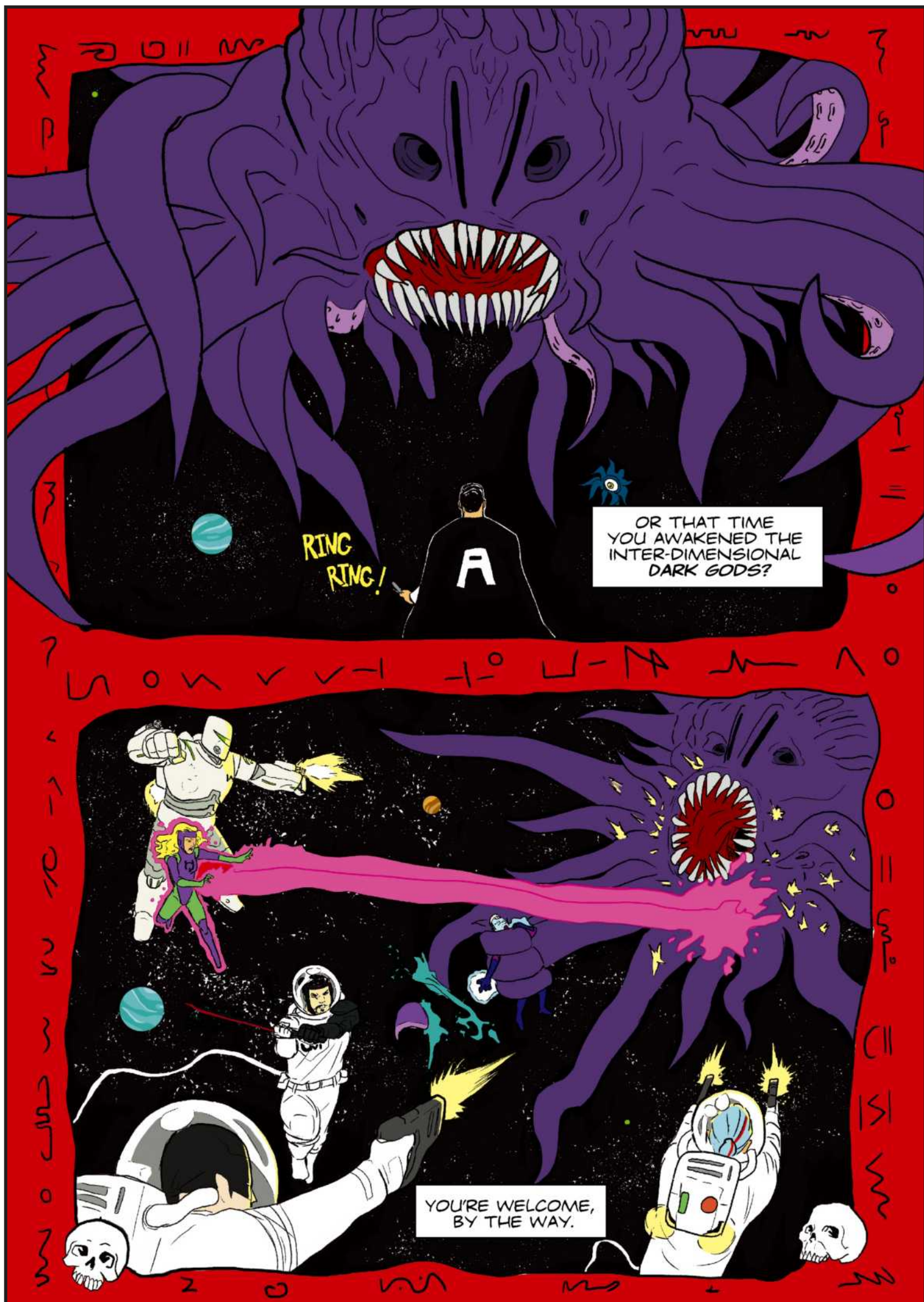


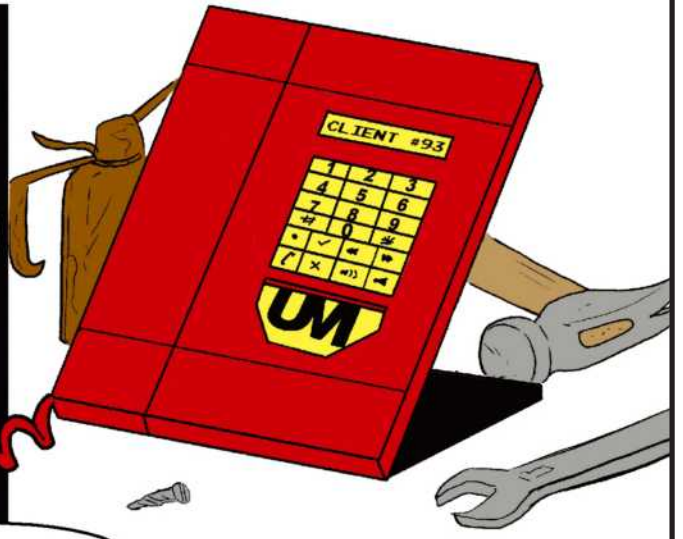
THERE WAS THAT TIME YOU UNLEASHED A ZOMBIE APOCALYPSE...

UNION HELPLINE? ERRR... I NEED SOME HELP.

YES, I'M PAID UP!

OKAY... IF I CLEAR OFF NOW YOU GUYS WILL COME AND SORT THIS OUT, RIGHT?





A
MONSTER YOU SAY?
AND YOUR FEES
ARE PAID UP?

LET'S
GO!



DOSSIER

SUBJECT: KAIJION THE RAGI

I DON'T
CARE WHAT THE
PRIME MINISTER
SAYS.

WE JUST DO
THE FIGHTING -
HE CAN REPAIR HIS
OWN DAMNED CLOCK.

AND YOUR
FEES ARE
GOING UP,
MATE!



DOSSIER

SUBJECT: ULTRA KITTY

STATUS: SCARDY CAT - FEES PAID

HAHAHA!

HSSS!
MY FEES ARE PAID!
GET ME DOWN, AND
STOP LAUGHING!
HSSSS!

HAHAHA!

HEHE!

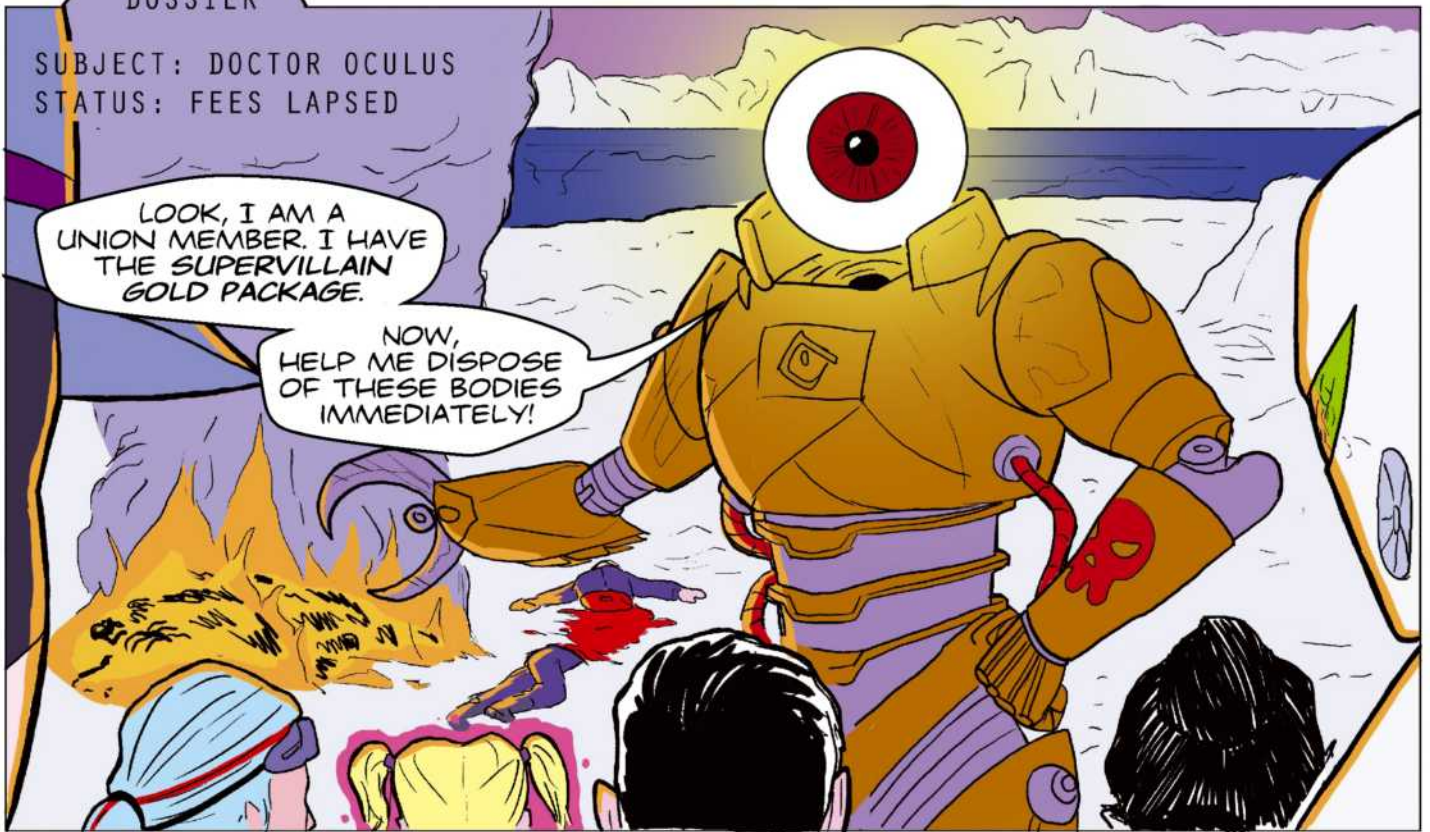


DOSSIER

SUBJECT: DOCTOR OCULUS
STATUS: FEES LAPSED

LOOK, I AM A
UNION MEMBER. I HAVE
THE SUPERVILLAIN
GOLD PACKAGE.

NOW,
HELP ME DISPOSE
OF THESE BODIES
IMMEDIATELY!



NOT
HOW IT
WORKS.

CLANG



BELTER!
I COULD GET
USED TO
THIS!





THE UNMENTIONABLES!

THEY'VE SEEN YOUR DIRTY LAUNDRY...

SCRIPT & LAYOUTS - CHRIS MURRAY

ART, DESIGNS & LETTERING - ELLIOT BALSON

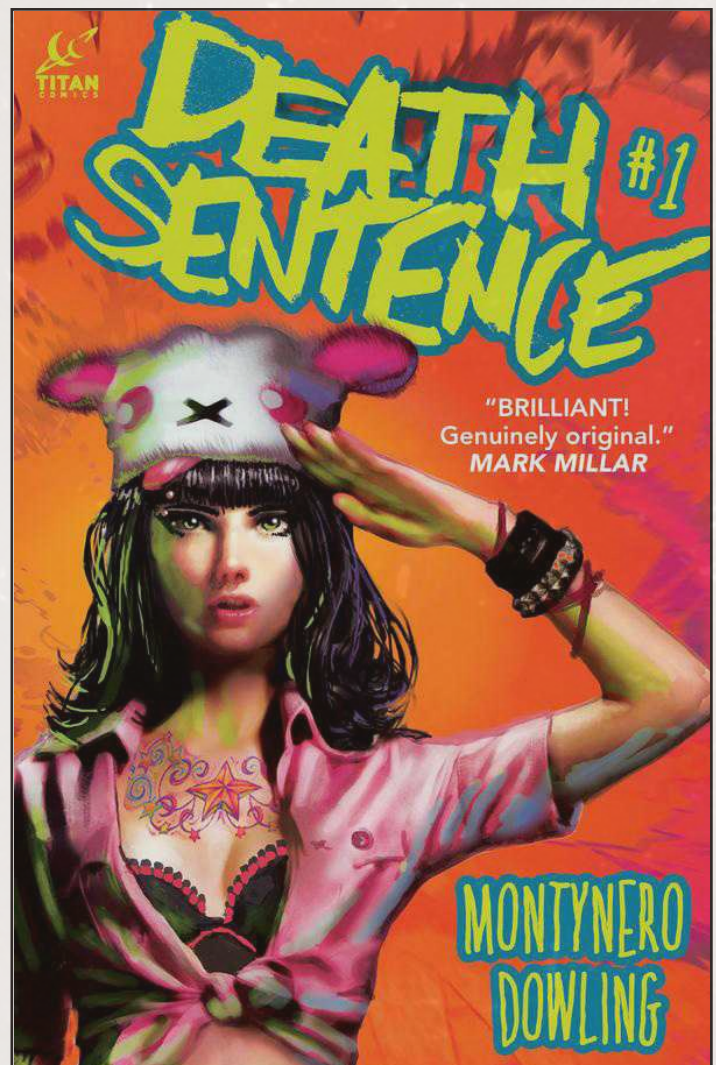
COLOURS & DESIGNS - MIKE MAYNARD

2000s

At the turn of the millennium the mainstream British comics industry was a shadow of what it once was, but there has been huge growth of independent and small press comics publications, supported by a huge number of events and conferences which now attract record numbers of creators and attendees. The creators who emerged in the 1980s and 90s, especially Grant Morrison, Mark Millar, Warren Ellis, Bryan Hitch, and Frank Quitely have become major figures and a new generation of creators is now emerging. These include Montynero, writer of the acclaimed series *Death Sentence*, and John Ferguson, writer of *Saltire*, a Scottish fantasy story which draws on Celtic mythology. *Saltire* has, since its inception, drawn on artists who have emerged from the University of Dundee's comics courses.

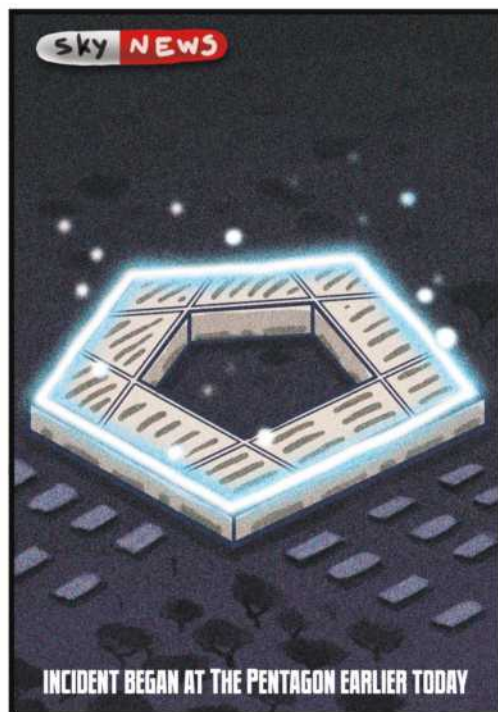
This section contains a story modelled on Marvel's Ultimate comics which is drawn by Yannis Giagias. The tone echoes the darkness of some of the Ultimate line, and especially Mark Millar's *The Ultimates*, although there is also a strong influence from Frank Miller's *The Dark Knight Returns*, *Watchmen* by Moore and Gibbons, and *Pax Americana* by Grant Morrison and Frank Quitely. There are also several references to Beatles songs, reflecting on the relationship between the so-called British Invasion of American music in the 1960s, and the waves of British Invasion that shaped comics from the early 1980s onwards. This is also a story about the political relationship between Britain and America in the post 9/11 era. The violence of contemporary superhero comics is also commented on in 'Superdeath!', a poster with art by Chris Murray, coloured by Rebecca Horner.

Montynero and Dan McDaid, who are professional comics creators, who live and work in Dundee, have generously provided sketches for this book. McDaid's character, Sky Knight is inked by Norrie Millar, and Montynero's sketch shows his character Weasel, from *Death Sentence* meeting Captain Britain. The final story in this book is drawn by Helen Robinson, and combines elements of *Watchmen* and *Zenith* with comics like *The New Frontier* by Darwyn Cooke. This story returns to the origin of Alpha and reimagines it in a post-modern, metafictional reworking of that narrative.



ULTIMATE ALPHA





"I BEGGED HER NOT
TO JOIN YOUR WAR."



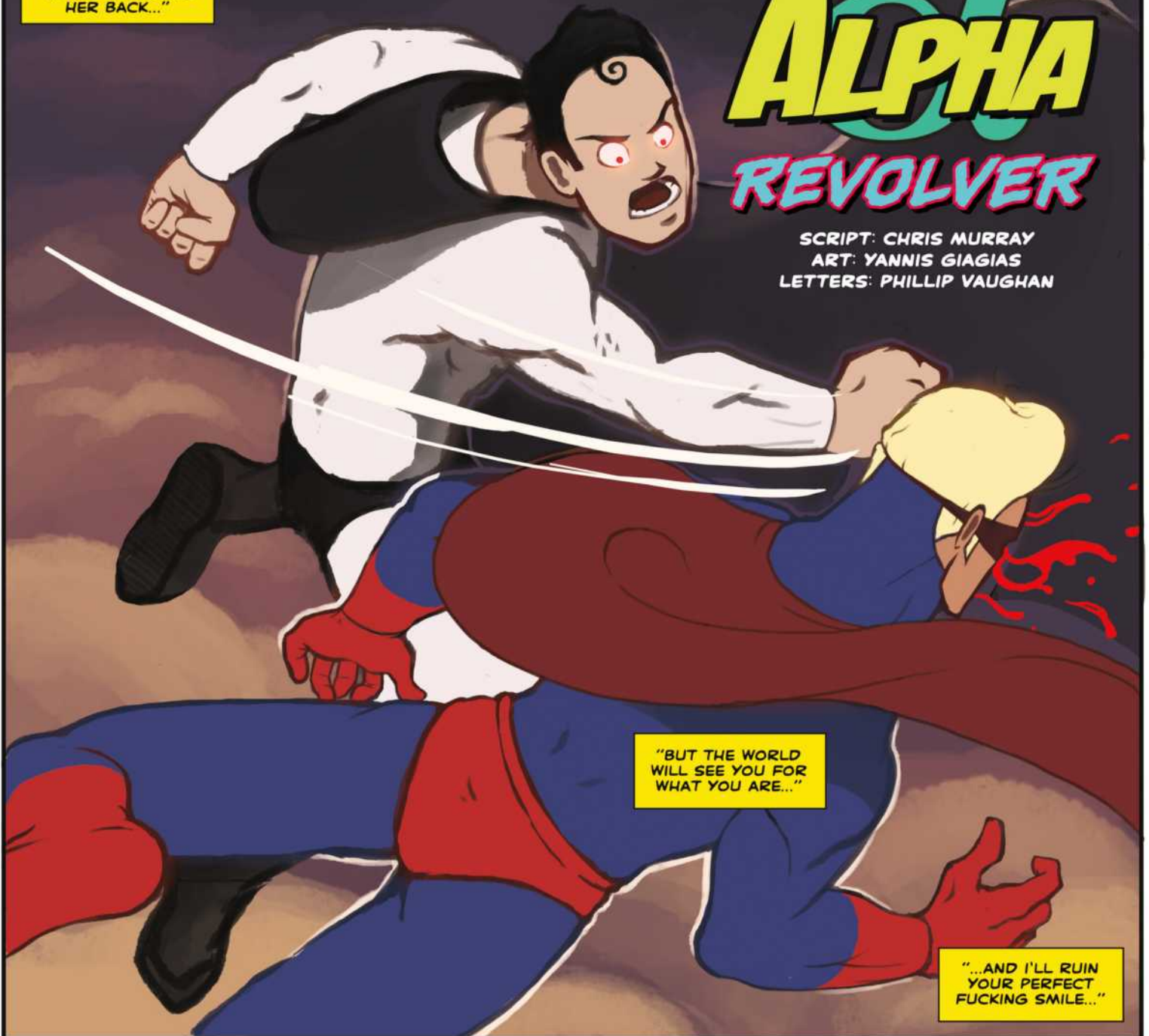
**JOIN UP TODAY,
BECAUSE TOMORROW
NEVER KNOWS.**



"BUT SHE WAS SO EAGER TO
PROVE HERSELF TO YOU."



"THIS WON'T BRING
HER BACK..."



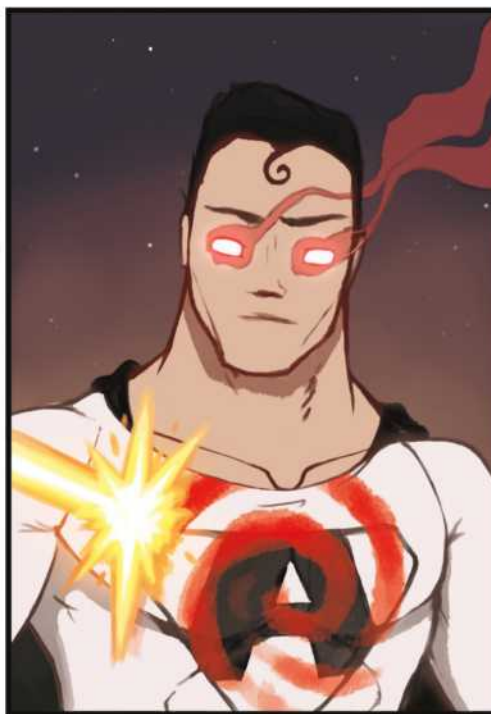
ALPHA REVOLVER

SCRIPT: CHRIS MURRAY
ART: YANNIS GIAGIAS
LETTERS: PHILLIP VAUGHAN

"BUT THE WORLD
WILL SEE YOU FOR
WHAT YOU ARE..."

"...AND I'LL RUIN
YOUR PERFECT
FUCKING SMILE..."



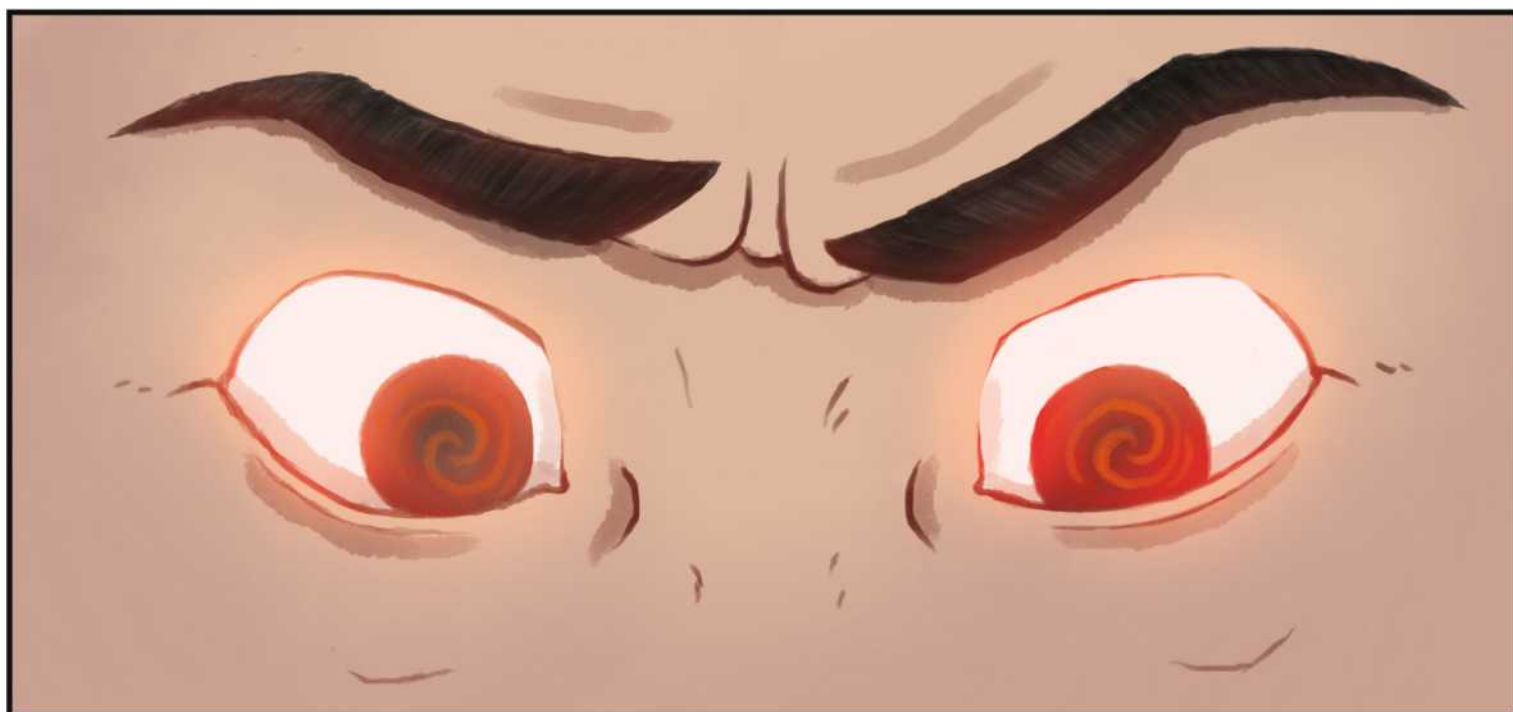


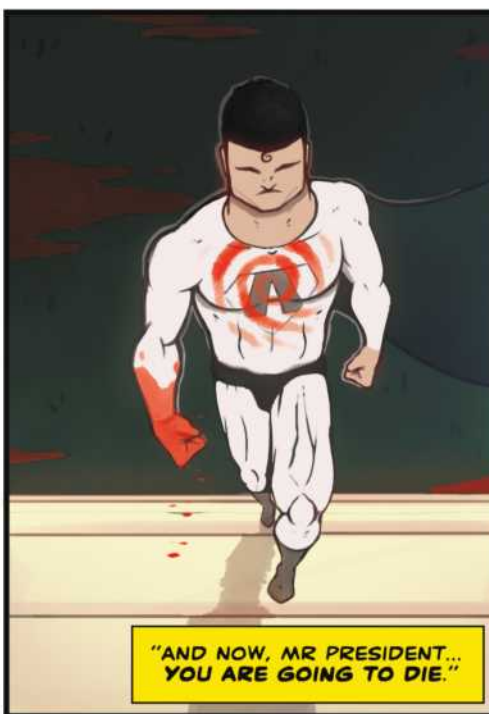
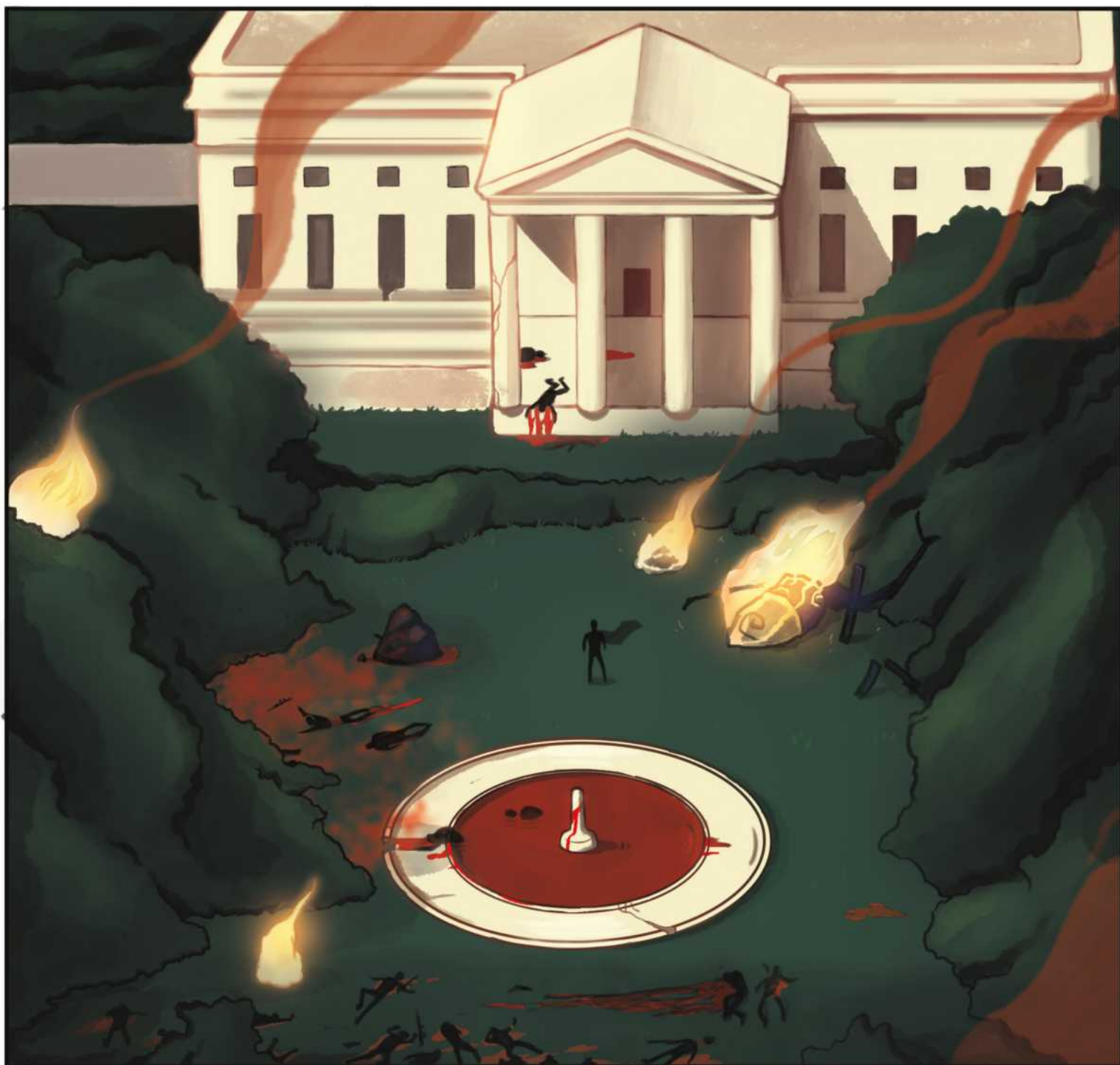


"AND NOW I AM
LITTLE BETTER THAN
YOU. A KILLER."



"I AM SO SORRY,
KATE. NO ONE
WAS SAVED."





AND THE WORLD TURNS...

COMING SOON
SUPERDEATH!

CARNAGE AT 24 PANELS PER SECOND!

FUCK SUPERHEROES

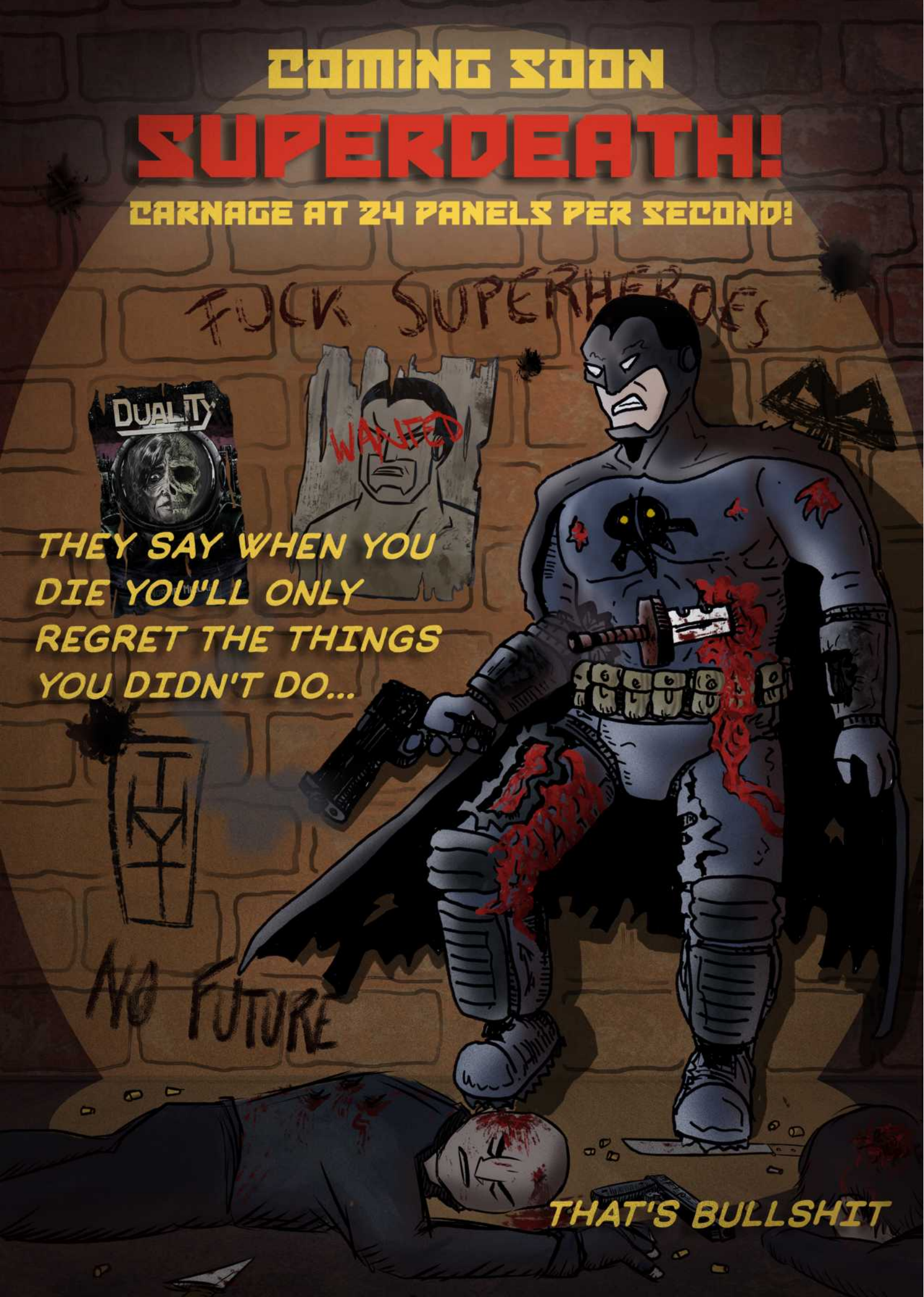
DUALITY

WANTED

THEY SAY WHEN YOU
DIE YOU'LL ONLY
REGRET THE THINGS
YOU DIDN'T DO...

NO FUTURE

THAT'S BULLSHIT



SKY KNIGHT



Pencils: Dan McDaid
Inks: Norrie Millar
Colours: Phil Vaughan

Illustration: Montynero



Interview with Molly Fullerton

This Interview with Molly Brand (Née Fullerton), daughter of Nat Fullerton, was conducted in 2006 in San Diego in advance of the release of the acclaimed series *Alpha*. The interview was originally published on the website www.popcultureatemyhamster.co.uk

PCAMH: Thank you Mrs Brand for meeting with us in beautiful San Diego. Are you enjoying the convention?

MB: It is so big. Overwhelming really. But wonderful. The costumes make me laugh.

PCAMH: You are here doing a panel about British comics, and helping to promote the new series based on your father's character, Alpha. Can you tell us a little about that?

MB: Absolutely. I am so happy to see this new series. The creators have done a fantastic job and I am sure it will be a big hit.

PCAMH: The story features a character based on your father. What do you think he would have thought of that?

MB: Well, remember that the first appearances of Alpha in the 1930s had a cartoonist called Nat Fullerton as Alpha's alter ego. That changed a bit over the years, and it's now back, but in a slightly different way. Here the creator of Alpha dies but Alpha then takes over his identity and...

PCAMH: Woah! Spoilers!

MB: Oh, I am sorry. Of course. I don't want to ruin anything.

PCAMH: Was there anything that you recognised from real life in the story?

MB: A great deal! But then the creators did a lot of research. I have lots of photos and newspaper clippings, interviews and so on. And I have it all organised. Back in the 1970s I started to write a biography of my father, but it was never finished. So the creators had a lot to go on. There is a lot of truth in this comic, believe me.

PCAMH: And of course, you continue to write the Trixie newspaper strip [see below].

MB: Yes, that is still going after all these years!

PCAMH: And what do you think your father would have made of San Diego Comic Con, and the popularity of comics fandom today?

MB: He would have loved it! And I am sure he'd be out there in an Alpha costume right now having the time of his life.

ENDS

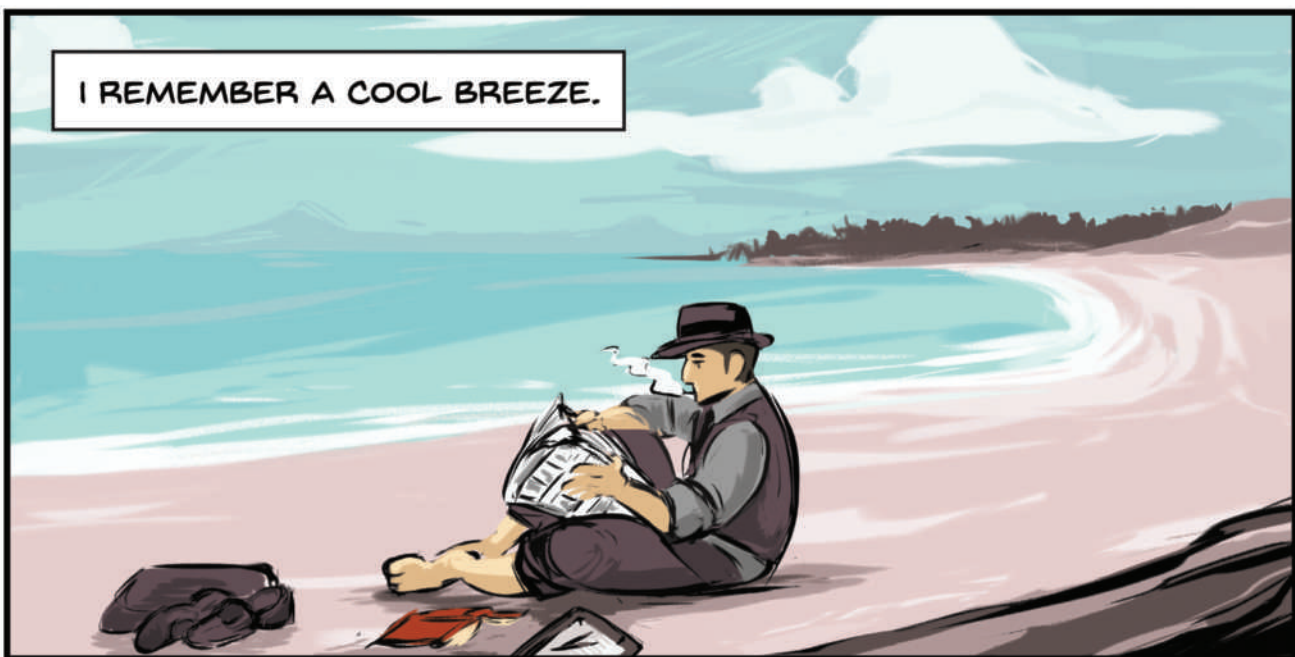


• ALPHA •



MURRAY • ROBINSON

I REMEMBER A COOL BREEZE.

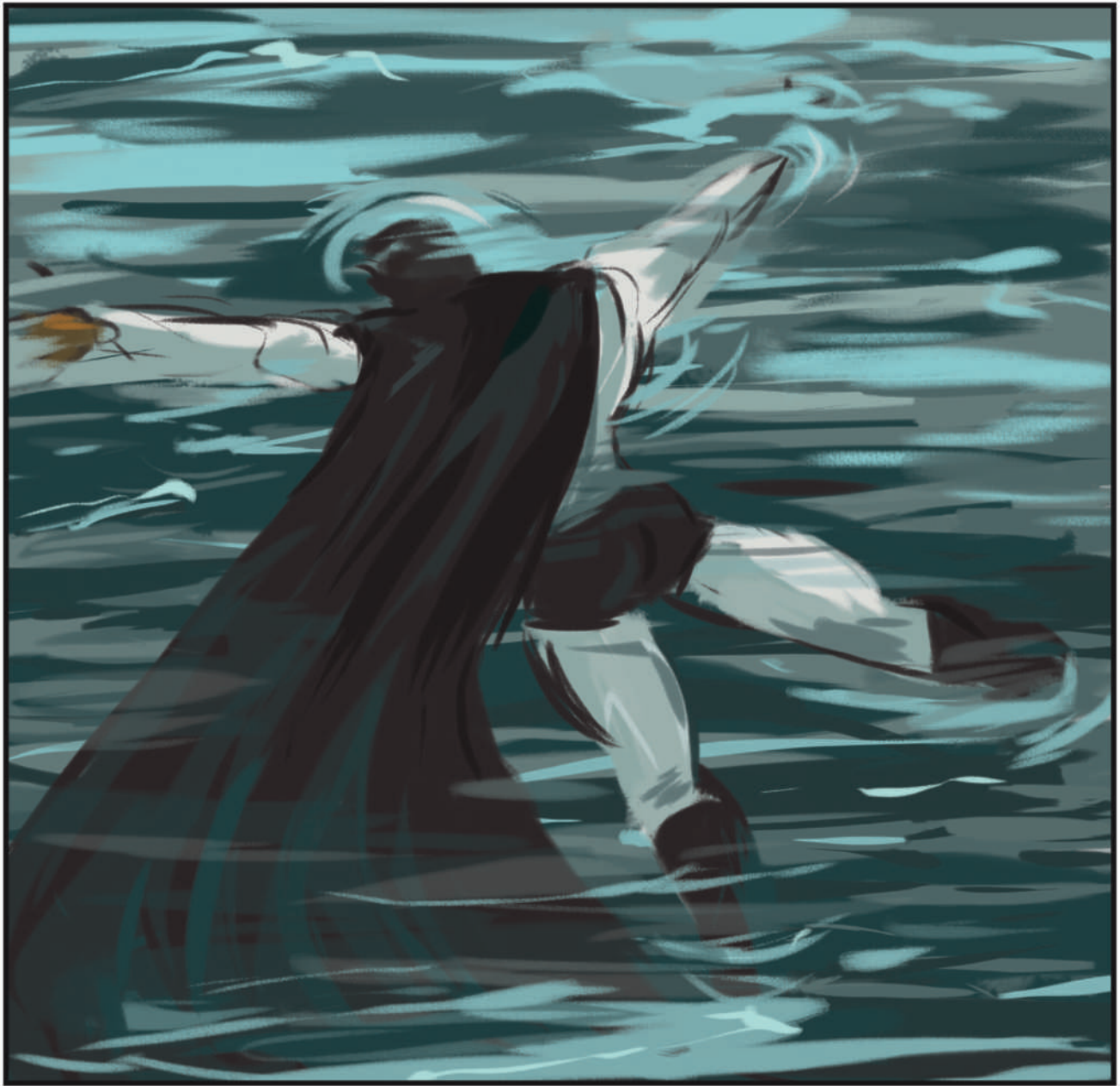


CLEAR SKIES.

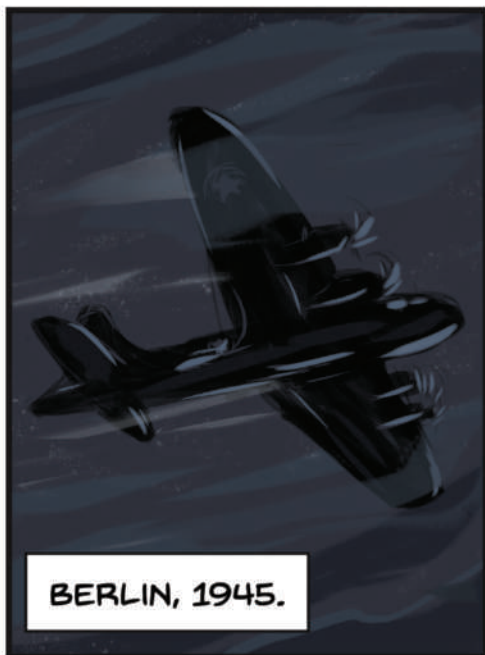


THINGS TAKING FORM.

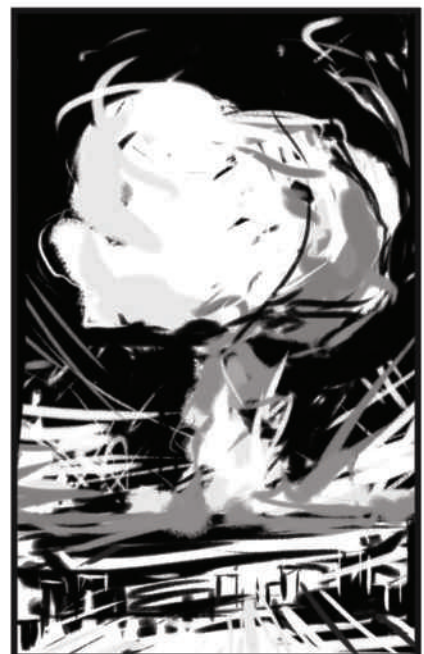
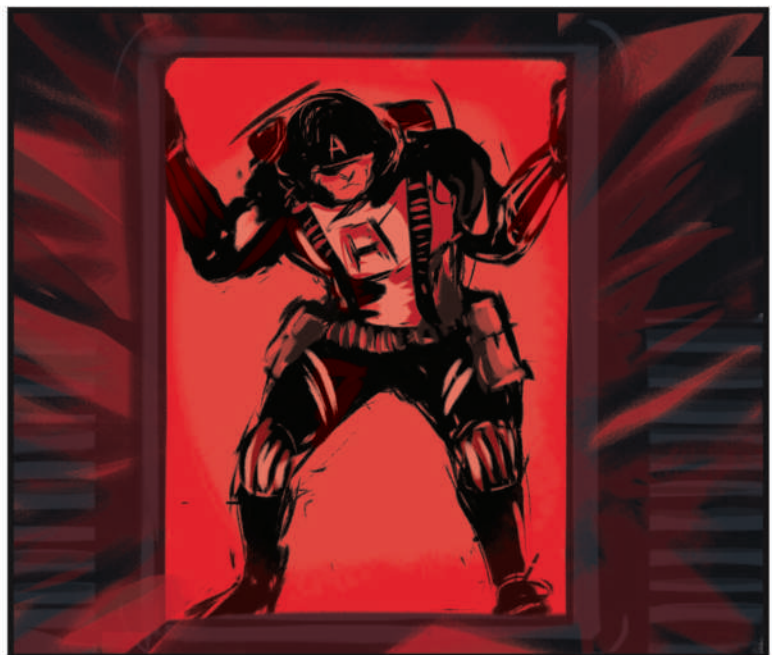


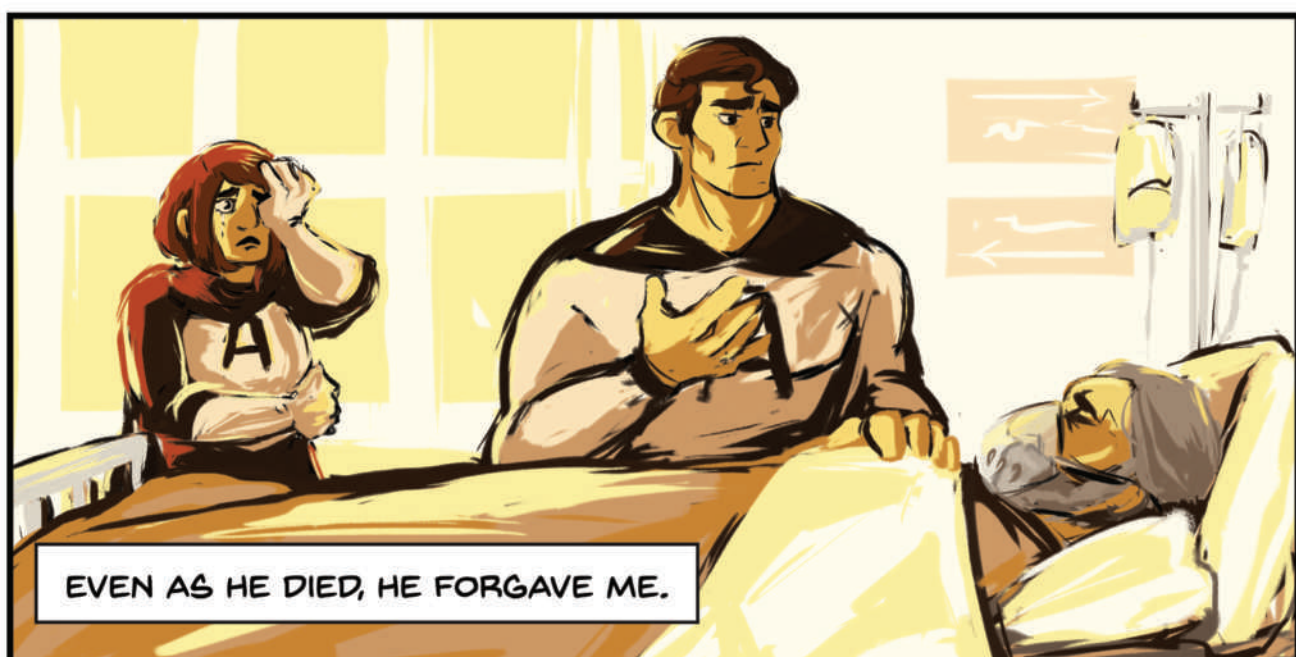




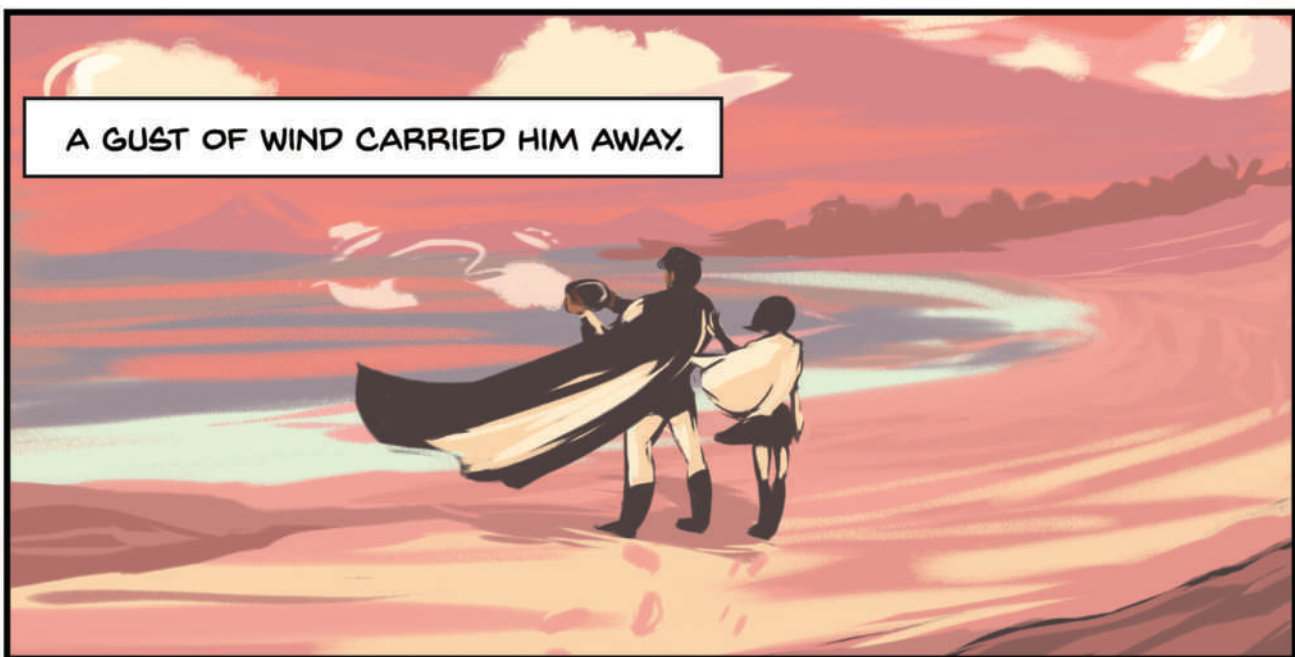


BERLIN, 1945.





A GUST OF WIND CARRIED HIM AWAY.



BORN OF INSPIRATION...



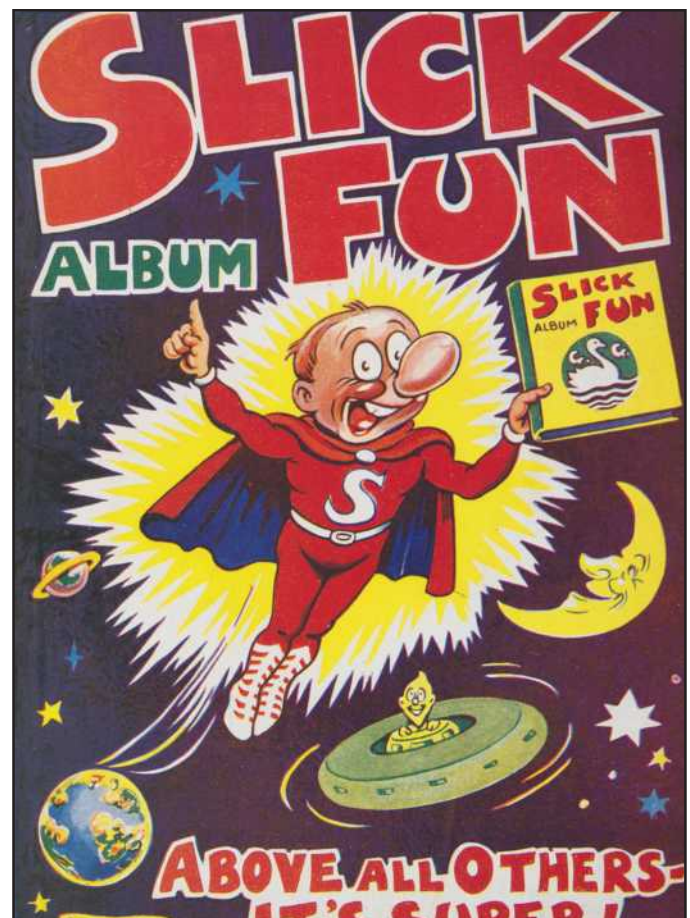
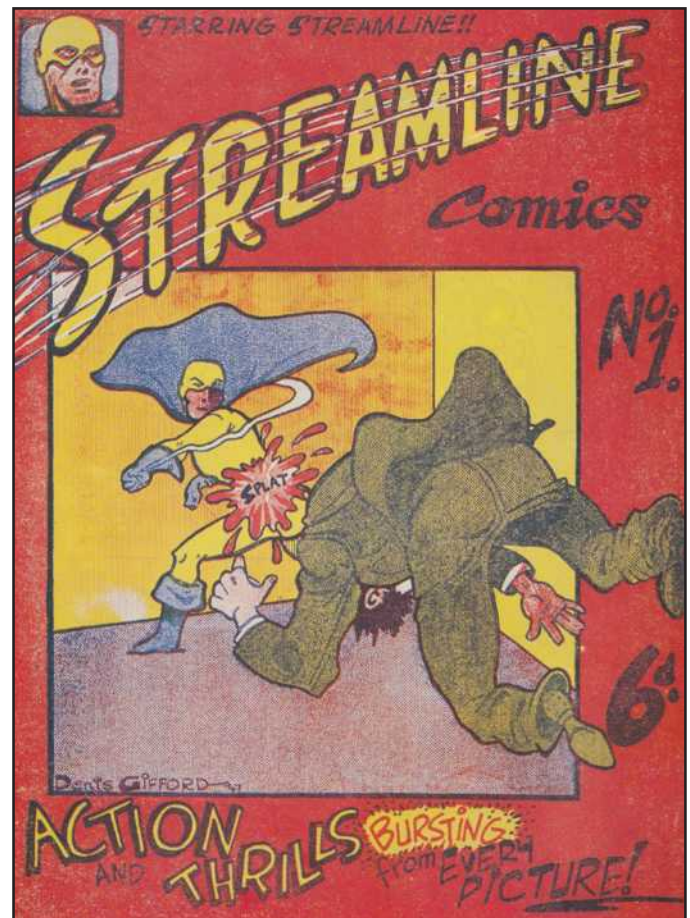
WE WILL BUILD A BETTER WORLD.

NEVER THE END...

The British Superhero

The idea of the British superhero is often considered to be a contradiction in terms. Superheroes belong to America. They soar between the skyscrapers of the great American cities, both real and imagined, from New York to Metropolis, Chicago to Gotham. They represent the ideals of “truth, Justice and the American Way”. In contrast British superheroes emerged as a critique of those ideals, and have therefore often adopted a mode of parody and satire, working against the assumptions and conventions of the genre, forming a counter-tradition that subverts the idea of the superhero. As comics writer and artist Dave Gibbons, the co-creator of *Watchmen* (1986), attests “superheroes in British comics have always been a bit strange. We’ve never gone for the full-on American model. They are always slightly odd and mutated [as if] viewed through a weird distorting lens” (Dave Gibbons, interviewed by Ricky Serrano Denis and Cletus Jacobs as part of the “Dave Gibbons at DC Thomson” exhibition held at the University of Dundee, 15th June 2015). This mutation is partly based on differences in cultural and industrial contexts, differing attitudes towards power and authority, and the fact that there is a particularly strong history of satire and parody in British comics that can be traced back through Alley Sloper comics, and the prints and cartoons produced by Hogarth, Gillray, and Rowlandson.

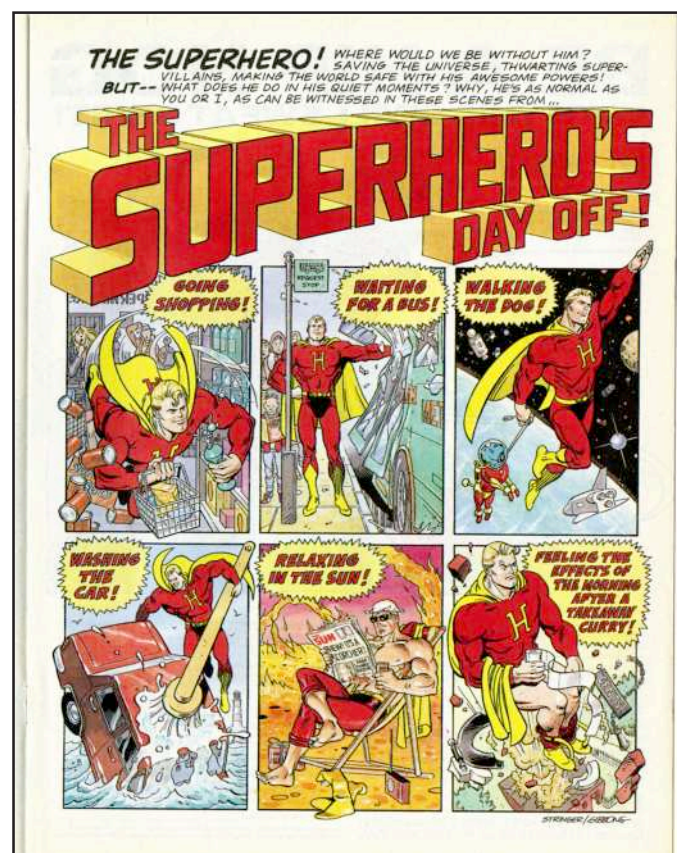
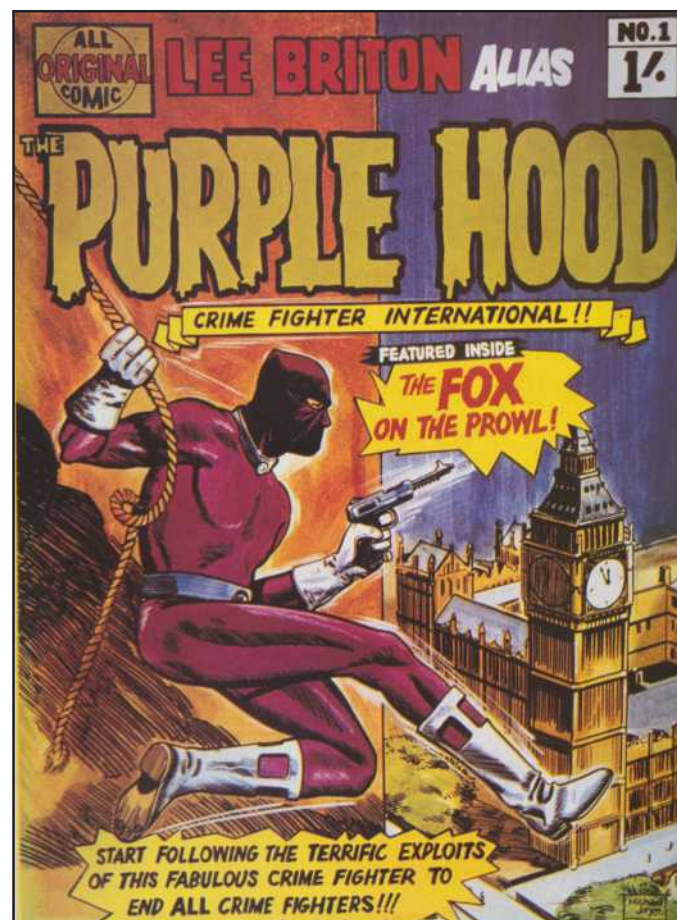
The British subversion of the superhero goes back to the late 1930s, shortly after the genre was born, but the best-known examples of this were seen in the early to mid-1980s in comics like *Watchmen* and *Zenith*, when British writers and artists had a significant influence on American superhero comics, forming the first wave of the so-called “British Invasion”, which was followed in the early 1990s by a second wave. Arguably this subversion is related to the close, and sometimes tense, relationship between the British and American comic industries, but it is a perhaps also a function of the political and cultural relationships between these two countries. On the surface the best of friends, and enjoying what was termed a “special relationship” by Winston Churchill, Britain and America have always been caught up in a complex political dynamic, from the American Revolutionary War and Declaration



status of superpower. This entrenched a certain amount of mutual suspicion, as well as some shared political interests and a high degree of cultural exchange through popular culture. The British superhero has therefore been a convenient vehicle for comics creators to comment on the political, cultural and economic relationship between Britain and America, and on the relationship of these two comics cultures and industries.

The focus of this book is the fictional character, Alpha, who is an amalgamation of several British superhero types, and is clearly influenced by American characters like Superman and Captain Marvel, who were themselves hugely influential on British superheroes. The origin of this idea emerged in the writing of an academic history of British superheroes, and was sparked by the long standing but as yet unsubstantiated rumour that when Jerry Siegel and Joe Shuster were attempting to sell the idea of a Superman newspaper strip in the mid-1930s the pitch actually made it all the way over the Atlantic to the offices of DC Thomson in Dundee, who rejected the strip, favouring local artists over two young boys from Cleveland. I have my suspicions that this story has been conflated with the undoubtedly true story that when Jerry Siegel was looking for work in the 1960s he approached DC Thomson before taking work with IPC to write 'The Spider' for *Lion*. However, the story that Superman nearly came to Dundee in the 1930s was a tantalising one, and I started to imagine what might have happened if it had been a success. The result was Alpha. Many of the ideas that emerged in the course of researching my book on the British Superhero (published by the University Press of Mississippi) are embedded in these stories, and hopefully capture something of the sensation of viewing the superhero through what Dave Gibbons has called "the weird distorting lens" of Britishness.

Chris Murray



Thumbnails & Sketches



A LONE ENEMY PLANE, AND A MYSTERY CLOSE TO HOME



A NAZI PLANE WEAVES BETWEEN THE FLANK AND SPOTLIGHTS OF DUNDEE'S WARTIME DEFENCES



IN HIS OFFICE AT MCCALL'S ART STUDIO, NAT FULLERTON HEARS THE BATTLE RAGING OVERHEAD, AND BURSTS INTO ACTION, AS ALPHA!



THE SUPERNORMAL ALPHA MAKES SHORT WORK OF THE ENEMY PLANE, SENDING IT SPIRALLING TOWARDS THE GROUND BELOW.



ALPHA HELPS THE SOLDIERS PULL THE PILOT FROM THE WRECKAGE, AND IS SHOCKED TO FIND THAT IT IS NONE OTHER THAN RODDY HISS OF NAZI HIGH COMMAND!



A QUICK SEARCH OF HISS REVEALS THAT HE IS A VERY SPECIAL POWER LETTER IN A STRANGE CODE, ONE IS ADDRESSED TO A MYSTERIOUS FIGURE WHO LIVES NEARBY.



FULLERTON TAKES THE SHORT TRAIN JOURNEY TO HOSPITAL FIELD HOUSE - A STRANGE PLACE THAT WAS ONCE A HOSPITAL FOR POORER VICTIMS.



THERE HE MEETS DOCTOR OCULUS, A CHARMING OLD MAN WITH A STRANGE TATTOO ON HIS FOREHEAD.



WHEN FULLERTON MENTIONS THE LETTER, DOCTOR OCULUS' DEMEANOR CHANGES AND HE USES MAGICAL POWERS TO HYPNOTISE FULLERTON!



FULLERTON AWAKES THE NEXT MORNING WITH NO MEMORY OF WHAT HAPPENED. HE IS ONCE AGAIN AT HIS DESK AT MCCALL STUDIOS.

A DIABOLICAL PLAN, THWARTED BY ALPHA!



TO HIS HORROR HE SEES THAT UNDER DOC OCULUS' POWERS HE HAS BECOME THE NIGHT DRAWING, PRO-HITLER COMICS! HE INSTANTLY REJECTS THE FOUL PLAN...



AT THAT MOMENT, OUTSIDE THE HEADQUARTERS OF THE COUNTRY'S MOST INFLUENTIAL PUBLISHER OF NEWSPAPERS AND COMICS, DR OCULUS WORKS HIS EVIL MAGIC.



FOLLOWING THE INSTRUCTIONS IN THE CODED LETTERS, DOC OCULUS HYPNOTISES THE STAFF IN THE BUILDING. IN MERE MOMENTS THEY WILL BE UNDER HIS POWER FOREVER!



BUT DOC OCULUS HAS RECKONED WITHOUT THE AWESOME MENTAL POWERS OF ALPHA.



THE STEADFAST HERO, WHOSE MIND COULD NEVER REALLY BE CONTROLLED BY THE POWERS OF HITLERISM, STRIKES BACK!



SOON HISS AND OCULUS SHARE A PRISON CELL. THE HEROIC ALPHA HAS SAVED THE DAY AGAIN.



BACK IN HIS CIVILIAN GUISE OF ARTIST NAT FULLERTON, OUR HERO RESUMES HIS JOB, CREATING WHOLESALE STORY COMICS TO ENTERTAIN THE NATION'S YOUTH.



BUT AS ALPHA HE IS EVER VIGILANT, A SENTINEL OF OUR SHORES, AND PROTECTOR OF LIBERTY AND THE EMPIRE!



NEXT WEEK MARKS THE SPOT OF A DANDY NEW SUPERNATURAL CHARACTER IS REVEALED!



1) ALPHA'S SECRET BASE WAS DEEP INSIDE 'THE CAVE', AN EXTINCT VOLCANO AT THE HEART OF THE CITY.



2) HE ENTERS BY A SECRET DOOR ON THE NORTH SIDE OF THE HILLSIDE, WHICH IS SHROUDED IN TREES.



3) WITHIN THE CAVERN CHAMBERS OF THE BASE ALPHA CONJURES AN ARSENAL OF WEAPONS AND GADGETS WHICH SERVE HIM IN HIS WAR AGAINST EVIL.



4) BUT SOMETHING IS AMISS - ALPHA'S KEEN SENSES DETECT THE PRESENCE OF A STRANGER IN HIS LAIR!



5) THE INTRUDER IS REVEALED - A YOUNG MAN WHO ANNOUNCES 'I AM ROCKET BOY! - LET ME AID YOU IN YOUR BATTLE AGAINST EVIL.'



6) ALPHA DEMANDS TO KNOW HOW THIS BOY GAINED ENTRY TO HIS SECRET LAIR. ROCKET BOY SHOWS ALPHA A SECRET TUNNEL THAT EVEN HE IS UNAWARE OF.



7) 'YOU ARE A BRAVE AND RESOURCEFUL YOUNG MAN ALPHA TELLS HIS UNLIKELY GUEST, 'BUT I CANNOT HAVE A PARTNER. I WORK ALONE.'



8) ALPHA FIXES ROCKET BOY WITH HIS HYPNOTIC 'MASH A' STARE, AND WIPES ALL MEMORY OF FINDING ALPHA'S SECRET BASE.



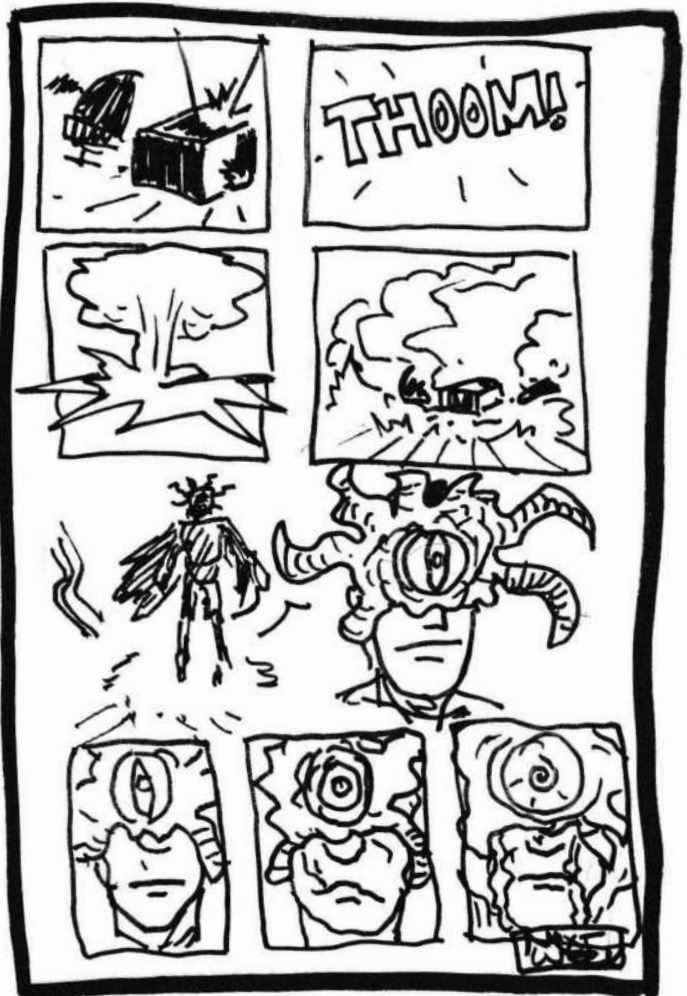
9) FIGHTING CRIME IS A LONELY BUSINESS, BUT ALPHA KNOWS THAT CHILDREN EVERYWHERE EXPECT HIM TO BRING TRIUMPH EACH WEEK!

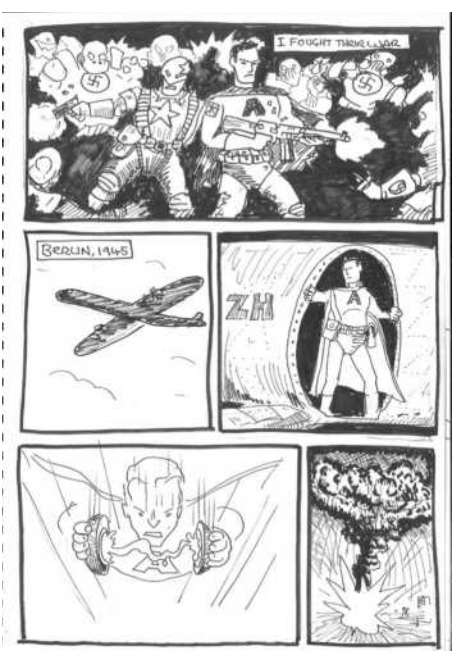
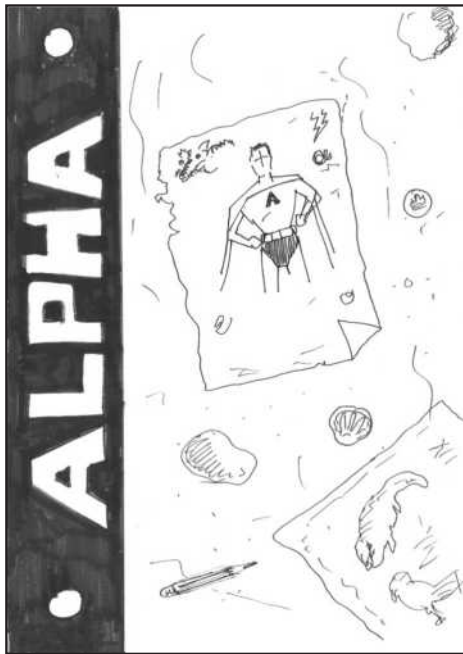


NY CITY SCAPE NIGHT

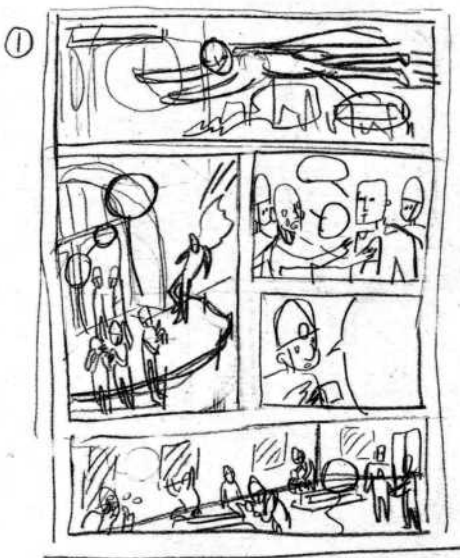
ALPHA

doc oculus + his obnoxious magic.

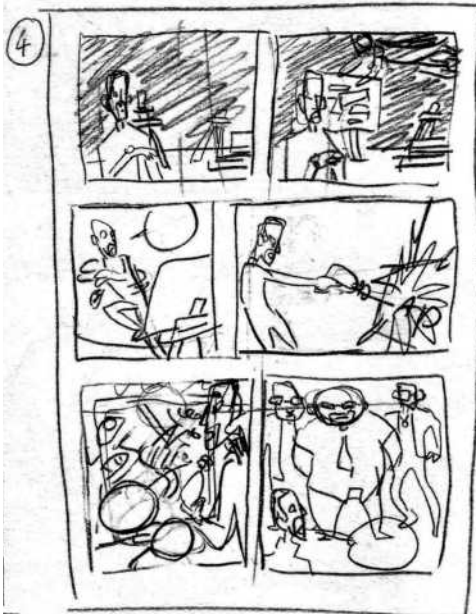




POP GOES THE ART WORLD!



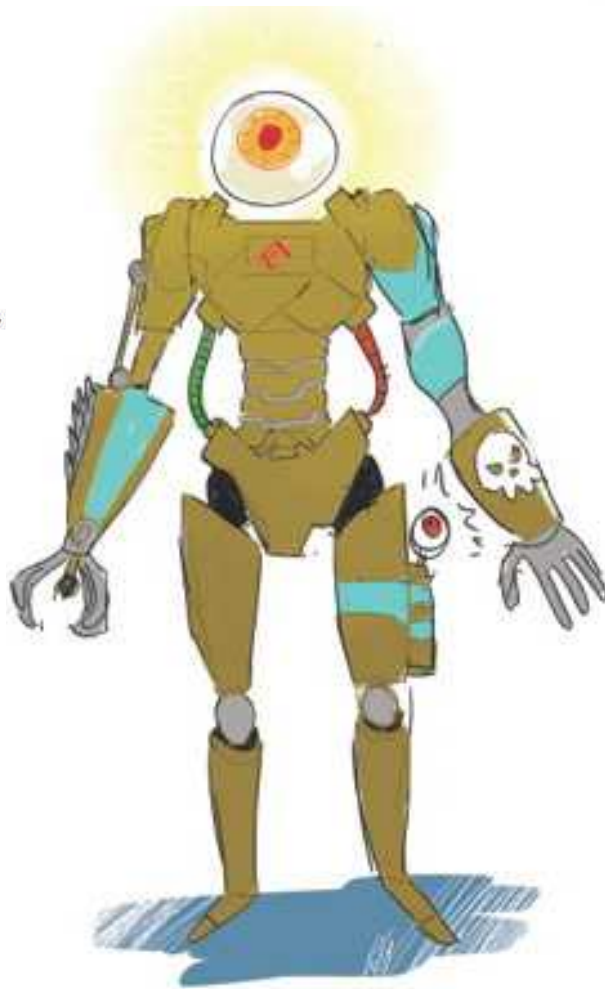
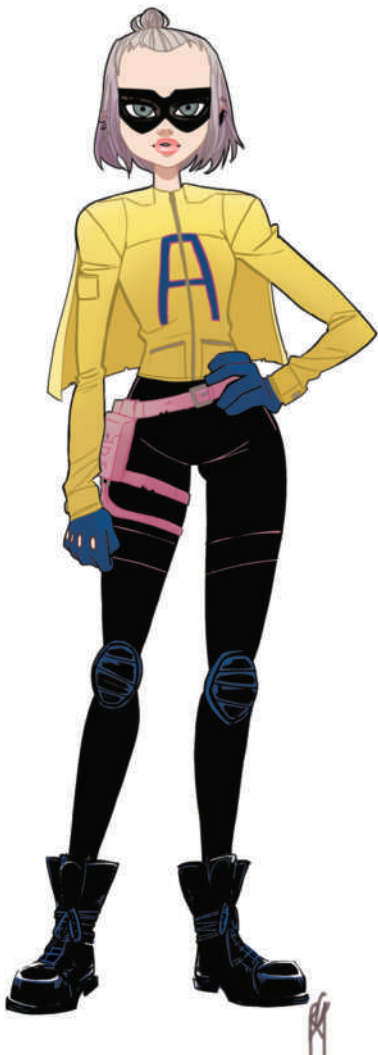
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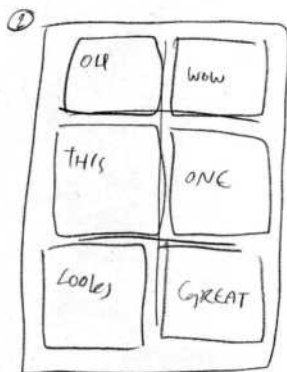
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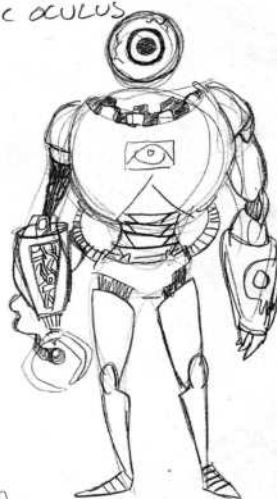
Development Work



A DAY IN THE LIFE OF DOC OCLUS

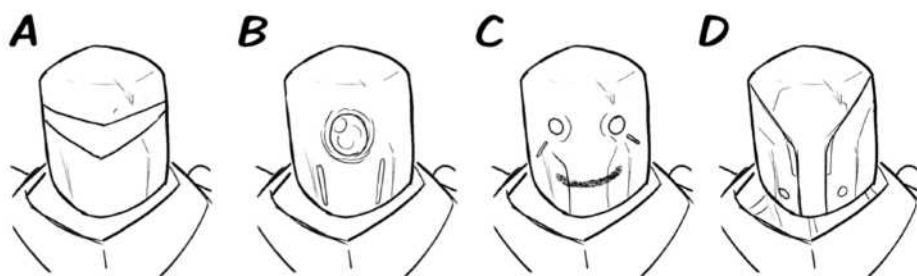
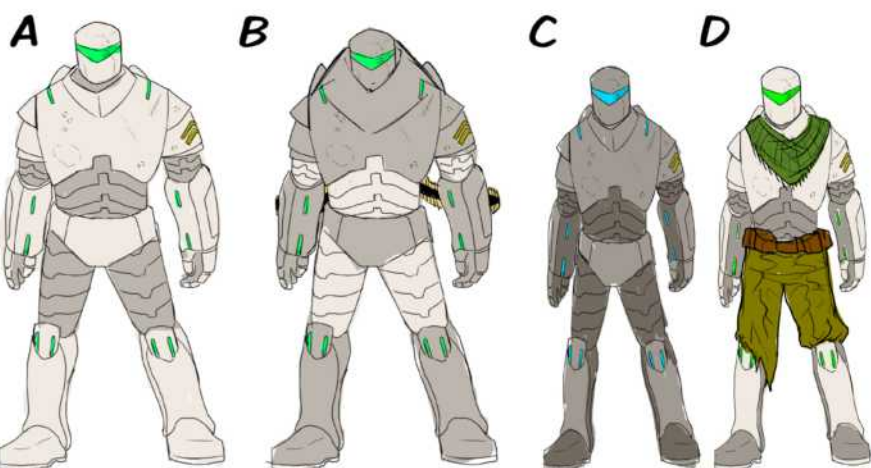
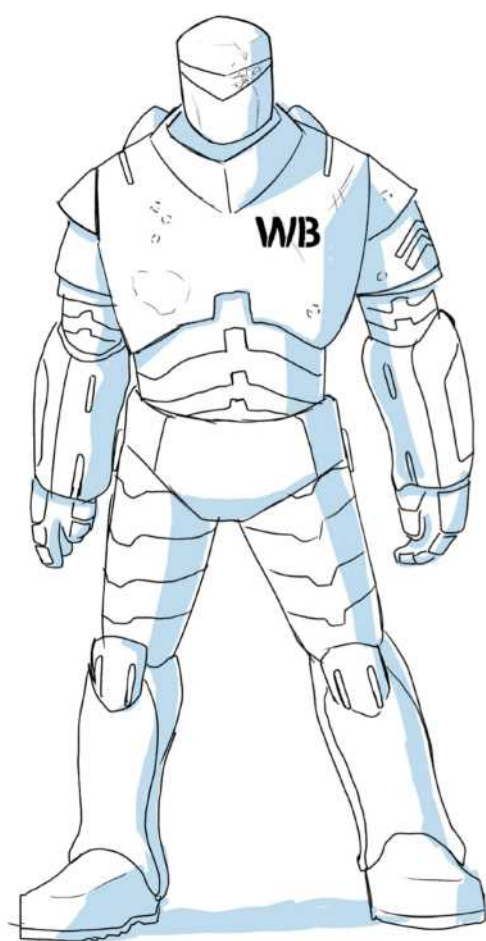


DOC OCLUS

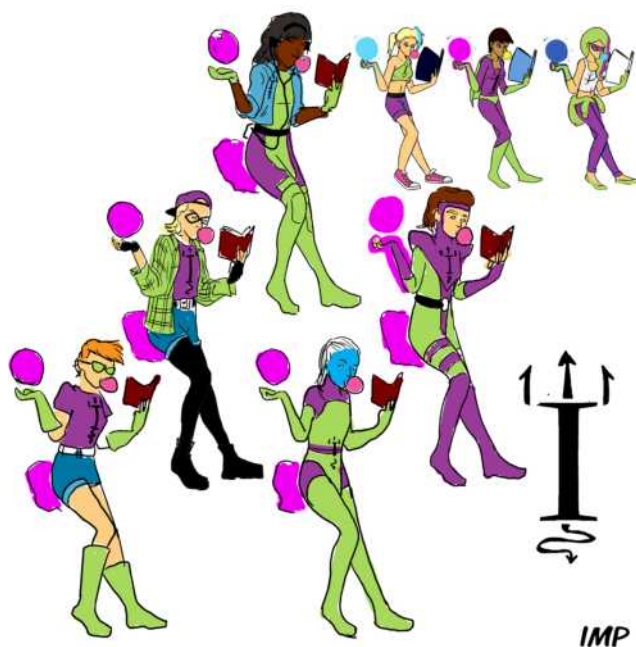
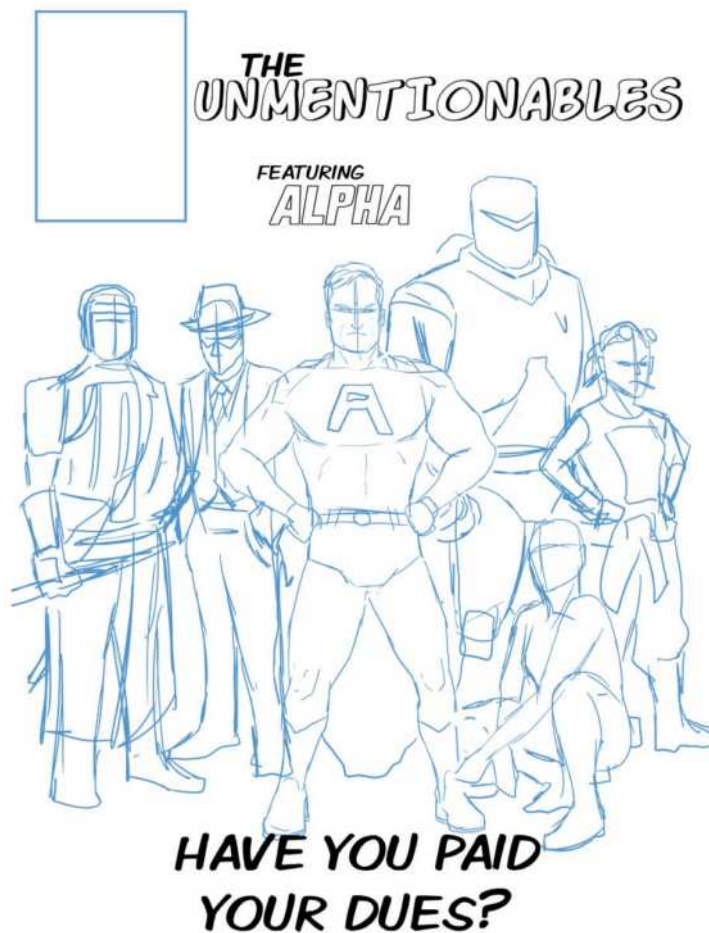


PUPPY!



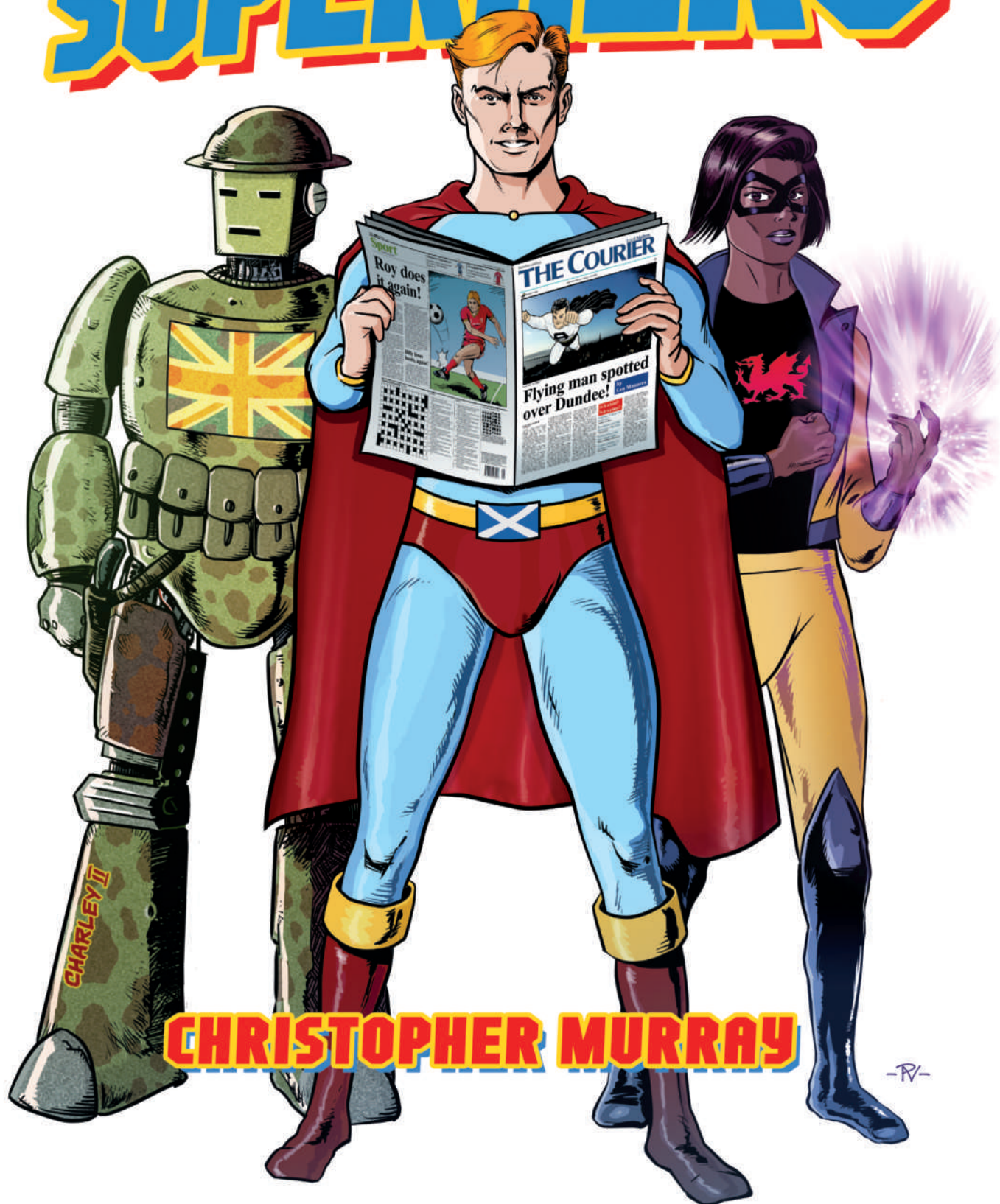


WARBOT





THE BRITISH SUPERHERO



COMING SOON FROM UNIVERSITY PRESS OF MISSISSIPPI

Creator Biographies



Chris Murray is a Senior lecturer in Comics Studies at the University of Dundee and is Course Director of the Masters in Comics and Graphic Novels (MLitt) and co-editor of Studies in Comics and UniVerse Comics. He has written extensively on British and American comics and is director of the Scottish Centre for Comics Studies and Dundee Comics Creative Space.



Phillip Vaughan is lecturer at Duncan of Jordanstone College of Art and Design and is Course Director of the Masters in Comics and Graphic Novels (MDes) and the Animation and VFX Masters (MSc). He is co-editor of UniVerse Comics Anthology and Tales of the UniVerse, which publishes work by comics students, and art director of Dundee Comics Creative Space and Diamondsteel Comics.



Elliot Balson graduated from Animation at Dundee University before taking the Masters in Comics Studies. He aims to move into a career as a comic book artist. His current comics work includes a companion comic for Scottish band Neshiima's album 'Beware of Girts' and various pieces for Dundee's UniVerse imprint. www.facebook.com/ellbalsonart



Damon Herd is a comics artist and researcher with a particular interest in autobiographical and performance comics. He is Co-ordinator of Dundee Comics Creative Space and also runs DeeCAP (Dundee Comics Art Performance). More info at www.damonherd.com and on Twitter @tickingboy



Jillian Fleck is a comic artist from Calgary who graduated from the Alberta College of Art and Design in 2012. Her comics have been published in a variety of independent anthologies across North America and around the world. In the summer of 2015 she participated in the New Gallery's Writer's Group Residency. She is currently studying in the University of Dundee's Comics Studies Masters program. jillianfleck.tumblr.com



Yannis Giagias studied the MSc in Animation & VFX at DJCAD/University of Dundee where he created the 2D animated film, Hell Well, a tale of a young family in a haunted house with a sinister well in the garden. He is now a working in Manchester as a Motion Designer.



Hannah Rose is a PhD student looking at Spanish Comics and Gender at the University of Dundee. Hannah also works as a professional artist alongside her studies, and lives in Fife where she enjoys a great view of the sea. www.facebook.com/stereoglamour



Rossi Gifford graduated from DJCAD with a degree in Fine Art and has gone on to become a successful comics artist. Her acclaimed series Spirit Leaves, which she started at the University, was published by Chapterhouse Comics in Canada, where she now lives and works, splitting her time between comics and animation. Her work can be found at www.instagram.com/rossi.gifford



Rebecca Horner studied Animation at DJCAD and is now working on a masters in Comics & Graphic Novels at the University of Dundee. She is also a facilitator at the Dundee Comics Creative Space. Her recent comics are The Light Thief (with Helen Robinson) and Sol. www.rebeccahorner.com



Mike Maynard came from the future with a simple dream - to destroy the inventor of the time machine. His task completed, he faded into relative obscurity by becoming a comics artist and colourist.



Norrie Millar is a comics creator from Scotland and a graduate of Duncan of Jordanstone College of Art and Design where he undertook both his undergrad and postgrad degrees in Fine Art. He graduated from the Masters in Comics Studies and is part of the Dundee based, Treehouse, a collective of artists and writers who self-publish our own anthology comic. He is a founder member of the Comics Studio at the Dundee Comics Creative Space. www.norriemillar.wordpress.com



Helen Robinson is a concept and comics artist who, when not drawing like a madwoman, is often traversing between Scotland and Northern Ireland, singing songs very out of tune, and occasionally lurking in a dark room playing video games. Her other recent comics are The Light Thief (with Rebecca Horner) and Cosmos in Blue (nominated for SICBA's Best Artist 2016). More of her work can be found at gofishblues.com and @gofishblues



Letty Wilson is a graduate of the MLitt in Comics Studies at the University of Dundee, where she met the various other comics enthusiasts which make up Panels Comics. Her recent work includes Cosmic, a SICBA award nominated sci-fi drama series, From the Deeps, a series blending Scottish myth and legend with modern genre fiction, and Park Witches, a comic adaptation of Macbeth for which she won the 2016 International Graphic Shakespeare Award. Her work can be found at <https://www.behance.net/lettydraws>

With thanks to Dave Gibbons, Dan McDaid, Montynero and Jules Valera, who generously provided artwork for this book.

TRUMP 2^d
Every Tuesday

ALPHA
BREAKS THROUGH!

TWO ALPHA
TOBACCO
CARDS
FREE INSIDE

**GIANT-
SIZED!**

TRUMP

NOW INCORPORATING - CHUMP

